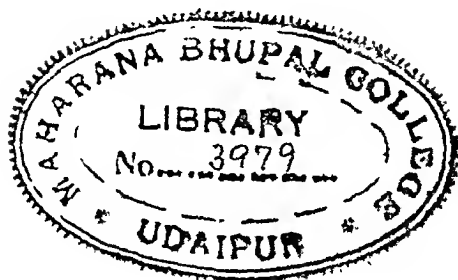


# The World's Classics

CCCCXV.

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GERMAN  
SHORT STORIES



OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMEN HOUSE E.C. 4  
London Edinburgh Glasgow  
*Leipzig New York Toronto*  
Melbourne Capetown Bombay  
Calcutta Madras Shanghai  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
PUBLISHER TO THE  
UNIVERSITY

# GERMAN SHORT STORIES

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SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY E. N. BENNETT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

E. K. BENNETT



LONDON  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
HUMPHREY MILFORD

*This selection of German Short Stories was first published in  
'The World's Classics' in 1934.*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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## INTRODUCTION

THE stories contained in this volume were all written during the first half of the nineteenth century and have been chosen not only for their intrinsic interest but also as examples of the work of writers who achieved distinction in this particular literary form. Considered chronologically they will also serve to illustrate the general development of German literature during the first fifty years of the last century from Romanticism to a type of literature in which realistic elements preponderated: the fusion of Romantic and realistic elements which takes place about the middle of the century is characteristic of most of the important works written during this period and was described by Otto Ludwig as poetic realism. 'Die Judenbuche'—the latest of these stories in point of time—may stand as a representative work of poetic realism, combining the poetical qualities of Romanticism with an exact observation of nature which was foreign to the Romantic writers themselves.

The short story—*die Novelle*, as it is known in German literature—was first developed as a definite literary form, in imitation of the *novelle* of Boccaccio, by Goethe in his *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, a collection of stories published in 1796. It proved a particularly happy vehicle for the poetical gifts of the Romantic writers at the beginning of the century and was developed by them in the direction of the

fairy-tale and the tale of marvellous and supernatural events. It reached its perfection in the works of the Swiss writer Gottfried Keller, in the second half of the century. One of the most beautiful short stories in the German language, 'The poor Fiddler', by Franz Grillparzer, is published in the collection of *Austrian Short Stories*.

The first story in chronological order contained in this volume is 'The Beggar-woman of Locarno', by Heinrich Kleist. Kleist, a Prussian by birth, and the scion of a family whose boast it was that all its male members were officers and poets, was above all famous as a dramatist. His tragic plays, still almost unknown in England, and little heeded in Germany during his lifetime, have gradually come to be regarded as the highest achievement in German tragic drama since Schiller. As a writer of short stories he holds an almost equally high position in German literature. Unfortunately lack of space forbade the inclusion of one of his longer stories ('Michael Kohlhaas' or 'Die Marquise von O.'), which are concerned like his dramas with psychological problems of a strange and even pathological character. 'The Beggar-woman of Locarno' may, however, serve to illustrate the terseness of his style and the absolute concentration upon the events narrated, with a complete elimination of discursive elements.

E. T. A. Hoffmann's fame rests upon his excellence as a writer of short stories, which form, with the exception of two novels, the main body of his work. He may be regarded as

a characteristic Romantic in his predilection for that aspect of the movement which concerned itself with the marvellous and the supernatural in nature and the irrational elements in human psychology. One of his novels, *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, owes much to the eighteenth-century English novel *The Monk*, by Lewis. In 'The Mines of Falun' he treats a subject which had already formed the theme of a story by Ludwig Tieck: 'Der Rumenberg', and reappears under various guises in the literature of many countries: the theme of the human being who has pledged himself to nature under one of her manifestations and perishes when he forsakes his loyalty to her for the love of another human being. Not all Hoffmann's stories are concerned with the supernatural, but it is this side of his work by which he is best remembered, and his influence in this direction upon writers of other countries, notably upon Edgar Allan Poe, was considerable.

One of the most delightful and graceful of the later Romantic writers is the poet Joseph, Freiherr von Eichendorff, whose nature poems and songs of wandering place him among the best German lyrical poets of the nineteenth century. His range, in his lyrics as in his short stories, is restricted, but within his limits he expresses a great delicacy of feeling, a sensitiveness to nature—in contrast to Hoffmann—in its more consoling and enchanting aspects, and a musical quality which is unsurpassed. Of his short stories the most famous, 'From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing', is included in this volume. It is a story in which delicate irony, wit and



playful charm together with the ability to reproduce landscape pictures of continually varying beauty, combine to create a masterpiece of romantic fantasy.

The most prolific of the writers whose stories are included in this collection is Ludwig Tieck. In virtue of his early works he came to be regarded as the representative poet of the Romantic movement at the time when its theories were first formulated as a definite programme by the brothers Schlegel. But very little of Tieck's work—plays, novels, poems, and stories—has survived, and he is now mainly remembered by some of his early short stories, of which 'Der blonde Eckbert', translated by Carlyle, is the most famous. Forsaking to a great extent the theories of Romanticism in his later years, he devoted himself between 1820 and 1840 to the composition of *Novellen* dealing with social problems of the time, often satirical in their castigation of the foibles of his contemporaries. The story 'Life's Luxuries' belongs to this later period of his literary activity. It is free from the tendentious quality of most of the stories written during these years and illustrates in the experiences of the young couple the idea that it is possible to dispense with many of the things which are normally regarded as the necessities of life.

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff is the greatest German poetess. Born of a noble Westphalian family, she spent the greater part of her life in her native province, of which her lyrical poems give pictures of very great beauty. Unlike the

Romantic poets of nature who were concerned to convey a mood or impression evoked by nature, Annette describes with minute and loving observation the landscape in which she lived. This power of realistic observation characterizes also her one *Novelle*, 'Die Judenbuche', the action of which is laid in Westphalia and based upon an incident which she found recorded in family documents. 'Die Judenbuche', in itself a masterpiece, stands at the threshold of the great period of the German short story; a period in which Theodor Storm, Adalbert Stifter, Gottfried Keller, and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer amplifying and elaborating the succinct narrative of events in which the *Novelle* originally consisted, and as which it still appears in Kleist's 'Beggar-woman of Locarno', developed it to a literary genre, worthy to rank beside the novel or the drama as a presentation of human character and fate.

E. K. BENNETT.

# THE MINES OF FALUN

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E. T. A. HOFFMANN

(1766-1822)

## THE MINES OF FALUN

ON a hot sunny July day all the people of Gothaborg were assembled by the waterside. A rich East Indiaman safely returned from distant lands lay at anchor in the rocky harbour, the long pennant, the Swedish flag, waving gaily in the azure air, while hundreds of boats of all kinds, filled with jubilant sailors, floated on the mirror-like surface of the Goathaelf, and the cannon on Masthuggetorg sent its resounding greeting far across the open sea. The gentlemen of the East India Company wandered up and down by the harbour and with smiling faces counted up their gains, heartily delighted with the way in which their undertakings improved year by year and dear Gothaborg bloomed ever more fresh and lovely as trade grew more flourishing. And therefore everybody looked with pleasure on these good gentlemen, and rejoiced with them, for with their earnings came strength and energy into the brisk life of the whole town.

The crew of the East Indiaman, about a hundred and fifty strong, landed from many boats and started off to keep the Honsung. That is the name of the feast which the sailors celebrate on such occasions, and which often lasts several days. Musicians in marvellous coloured garments went ahead, with fiddles, pipes, oboes, and trumpets which they played upon valiantly, whilst others sang all sorts of

merry songs to their accompaniment. These were followed by the sailors two by two. Some with coats and hats decorated with gay coloured ribbons were waving flags, others danced and jumped, and all shouted and made merry so that the gay noise could be heard for a great distance.

Thus the joyous procession went through the docks—through the suburbs to Haga, there to drink and make merry to their hearts' desire.

The finest beer flowed there in streams, and tankard after tankard was emptied. And, as is always the case when sailors return from a long voyage, there were soon a number of smart young women there to greet them. Dancing began, the festivities got wilder and wilder, the rejoicings louder and more furious.

Only one single sailor, a slim good-looking youth, scarcely twenty years of age, had slipped away from the turmoil and seated himself on a bench beside the door of the inn.

A few sailors came out to him, and one of them, laughing loudly, cried out: 'Elis Frobom! Elis Frobom! Are you being a miserable fool again and wasting this good time in silly brooding? Listen here, Elis, if you are going to stay away from our Honsung you had better stay away from the ship as well. At this rate you will never become a decent hard-working sailor. You have courage and are brave in face of danger, but you can't drink, and you would rather keep your ducats in your pockets than throw them to the landlubbers here! Drink, fellow, or may the sea devils, the whole pack of them, fall upon you!'

Elis Frobom jumped up from the bench, stared at the sailors with glowing eyes, took up a brimming cup of spirits and emptied it at one draught. Then he said: 'There, Joens, now you see that I can drink as well as any of you, and the Captain can decide what sort of sailor I am. But now hold your tongue and get away from here. I hate your wild merriment. What I am doing out here is no concern of yours.'

'Now, now,' replied Joens, 'I know you have always been a Neriker and they are all gloomy and sad, and don't really enjoy a sailor's life. Wait a bit, Elis, I will send some one out to you who'll soon get you away from that bench to which you seem to have been nailed.'

In a very short time a smart young girl came out of the door of the inn and sat down beside the gloomy Elis, who was again seated, dumb and brooding, on the bench. The girl's profession was obvious from her clothes and her manner, but she was still young enough to have retained freshness and charm in her yet pleasing features. There was no sign of repellent shamelessness about her, rather an expression of yearning sorrow lay in her dark eyes.

'Elis! aren't you going to take any part in the gaieties of your comrades? Don't you feel any pleasure in having once again escaped the threatening dangers of the treacherous sea, and being back again in your own country?'

Thus spoke the girl in a gentle, quiet voice, putting her arm round the youth's shoulders. Elis Frobom, as though waking from a dream, gazed into the girl's eyes, took her hand and

pressed it tightly. It was obvious that her gentle whisper had sunk deep into his heart.

'Ah,' he said at last, 'happiness and pleasure are not for me. At least, I cannot take part in the orgies of my companions. Go in, my dear child, dance and make merry with the others if it gives you pleasure, but leave sad, miserable Elis out here alone; he will only spoil all your pleasure. But wait—I like you, and you must think well of me when I have gone to sea again.'

So saying, he took two shining ducats from his pocket, drew a fine East Indian shawl from under his coat, and gave both to the girl. The tears came into her eyes, she stood up, laid the money on the bench and said, 'Oh, keep your ducats, they only make me unhappy', but this beautiful shawl, I will keep it to wear in memory of you, and next year when you keep Honsung here you won't find me.'

And with that she went, not back into the inn, but, both hands before her face, away down the road.

Once again Elis Frobom sank back into his gloomy meditations, until, when the merry-making in the inn had reached its loudest, he called out, 'Oh, would that I were lying at the bottom of the deepest sea, for there is nobody left alive with whom I could be happy.'

A deep, gruff voice behind him replied, 'You must have suffered a very great unhappiness, young man, if already, with life just opening before you, you wish yourself dead.'

Elis looked round and saw an old miner leaning with folded arms against the wall of the inn

and looking down on him with eager, searching eyes.

As Elis looked at him, he felt as a man might feel, who, thinking himself lost in a lonely place, suddenly sees a well-known figure coming towards him, offering a welcoming hand. He pulled himself together and explained that his father had been a skilful pilot but had been lost at sea in a storm from which he himself had been rescued in a marvellous manner. Both his brothers were soldiers and had fallen in battle, and he had managed to keep his poor, lonely mother on the splendid earnings of his East Indian voyages. He had been destined from childhood for a sailor's life, and a sailor he had remained, thinking himself very lucky to get into the service of the East India Company. This voyage had been even more prosperous than usual, and every member of the crew had received a good sum of money apart from his wages, so that with his pockets full of ducats he had gone joyfully off to the cottage where his mother lived. But strange faces had gazed at him from the windows, and the young woman who had finally opened the door to him, and to whom he explained who he was, told him coldly that his mother had died three months before, and that the few rags left over when the funeral expenses were paid were lying at the Town Hall waiting for him to claim them. His mother's death was breaking his heart, he felt himself forsaken by every one, lonely as one wrecked on a desert island, helpless, miserable. His whole life at sea appeared to him as a useless, purposeless



activity; yes, when he considered that his mother had probably been wretchedly cared for by strangers, it seemed to him even infamous and horrible that he ever went to sea, and did not rather stay at home to look after and care for her. His comrades had brought him forcibly to the Honsung, and he had himself thought that perhaps the merriment around him and the strong drink would deaden his sorrow, but instead of that he felt as though his heart must break.

‘Yes,’ said the old miner, ‘you will soon be at sea again, Elis, and then your sorrow will be forgotten in a short time. Old people die, that is only natural, and you yourself have said that your mother’s was but a poor, miserable existence.’

‘Ah,’ sighed Elis, ‘nobody believes in my unhappiness, most people chide me for being silly and foolish, and that is what makes me feel so forsaken. I do not want to go to sea again. I have a horror of the life. And it used to be my greatest joy when the sails were unfurled like stately wings, and the ship glided over the water, and the waves rippled or blustered, making merry music, and the wind whistled through the rigging. Then I shouted gaily with my comrades on the deck, and if I had the watch on a still, dark night, I thought of the happiness of returning home, and how my good old mother would rejoice when Elis returned! Ah, yes! then I could make merry at the Honsung, when I had poured my ducats into my mother’s lap, when I had given her the lovely shawls and the other gifts I had brought her home from distant lands.

How her eyes would light up with pleasure when she folded her arms, quite overcome with happiness and excitement, when she tripped busily about, and brought out the finest beer which she had stored up for Elis's return. And when I sat with her in the evenings I used to tell her about all the queer people I met, and their customs and habits, about anything strange I had seen during my long voyages. She loved to hear it, and in return told me about my father's wonderful voyages to the Far North, interspersed with many a terrifying seaman's legend which I had heard hundreds of times but could not hear too often. Ah! who can give that happiness back to me! No, never again will I go to sea! What should I do amongst my comrades who would only laugh me to scorn, and how should I enjoy work which would seem but a wearisome expense of energy for nothing!

'I have listened to you gladly, young man,' said the old miner as Elis ceased speaking, 'just as I have watched you during the last few hours without your noticing it, and felt pleased with your behaviour. Everything which you have done or spoken is a sign that yours is a retiring, pious, childlike disposition, and high heaven could not give you a more precious gift. But you have never been suited for a sailor's life. How should so quiet, almost sombre a Neriker (for that you are one, your features, your whole bearing shows) fit into the wild, restless life at sea? You are wise to forsake such a life. But you don't want to fold your arms and sit back yet? Take my advice, Elis Frobom, go to Falun

and become a miner. You are young, strong, certainly you would soon be a good apprentice, then a hewer, master-miner, and always higher up the ladder. You have useful money in your pockets, invest that, add your earnings, and you will soon own a miner's licence and a share in the mine. Take my advice, Elis Frohom, become a miner.'

Elis Frohom was startled by the old man's words. 'What?' he cried, 'what are you advising me to do? I am to leave the beautiful, free earth, the bright, sunny heavens which surround me, reviving, refreshing. I am to leave all that and go down into the terrifying depths of the underworld to dig and bore like a mole for minerals and metals just for the sake of vile profit?'

'You are all alike,' cried the old man angrily, 'you are all scornful of anything you do not understand. Vile profit! As though all the horrible torments which are part of commerce above ground were nobler than the work of a miner, to whose knowledge, to whose unwearying toil Nature opens her most secret treasure hoards. And you talk of vile profit, Elis Frohom!—this is a matter of something much higher. If the blind mole bores into the earth following blind instinct, it may well be that in the deepest shafts by the faint light of the lantern the human eye becomes more clear-sighted, yes, that at last, growing stronger and stronger, it may see in the marvellous metals a reflection of that which is hidden above the clouds. You know nothing of mining, Elis Frohom, let me explain it to you.'

With these words the old man seated himself on the bench beside Elis and began to describe in great detail the workings of a mine, and took great trouble to paint it in the most living colours to make it real to one who knew nothing of it. He spoke of the mines of Falun, in which, he said, he had worked since his boyhood; he described the great pit-head with its dark-brown walls through which one passed, he spoke of the immeasurable richness in lovely metals of the principal shaft. He grew more and more vivacious, his eyes more glowing. He wandered amongst the shafts as in a magic garden. The minerals came to life, the fossils moved, the wonderful pyrope, the almandine, blazed in the light of the lanterns—the rock-crystal caught the light and sparkled.

Elis listened eagerly; he was completely enthralled by the old man's strange manner of speaking of the underground wonders as though he were amongst them at the moment. Oppression seized him, he felt as though he were already in the pits with the old man, and a powerful magic was keeping him there so that he should never again see the friendly light of day. And yet he felt as though the old man had opened out to him a new, unknown world to which he belonged, and the magic of that new world had really been his in secret since his childhood.

'I have shown you, Elis Frobom,' said the old man at last, 'all the glories of a realm for which Nature really designed you. Go and think it over and then do as your feelings dictate.'

With that the old man jumped hastily up from

the bench and strode away without speaking another word to Elis or turning for another glance. He was soon out of sight.

In the meantime the noise in the inn had ceased. The strong beer and spirits had exerted their power. Many of the sailors had slipped away with their sweethearts, others lay about in corners and snored. Elis, who had now no home, rented a tiny attic in the inn, in which to sleep.

Hardly had he lain down, tired and weary as he was, than dreams began to weave their spell over him. He thought he was on a beautiful ship under full sail on a sea smooth as glass, under a sky overcast with dark clouds. But when he looked down into the water, he soon realized that what he had imagined to be sea was really a solid, transparent, glittering mass, in which in some strange manner the whole ship melted away, so that he was left standing on a floor of crystal, and could see over him a vault of shining black stone. For what he had thought clouds was stone. He hurried forward, urged by an unknown power, but at the same moment everything around him began to move, and like ruffled waves marvellous flowers and plants of shining metal rose from the floor, the flowers and leaves creeping out of the depths and intertwining in the most charming manner. The floor was so clear that Elis could see quite clearly the roots of the plants; but searching ever deeper, he saw far down—innumerable beautiful young female figures, their white arms encircling one another, and in their hearts were the roots of those plants which were growing up around

him, and when the girls laughed a sweet harmony filled the great vault, and the wonderful metal flowers grew taller and more lovely. An indescribable feeling of mingled pain and pleasure seized the youth, a world of love, longing, and ardent desire flooded his heart. 'Down, down to you,' he cried, and threw himself without stretched arms on the crystal floor. But it gave under him and he was left to swim in shimmering ether. 'Well, Elis Frobom, how do you like this glorious place?' cried a powerful voice, and Elis found at his side the old miner, but as he looked at him he appeared to turn into a gigantic figure in glowing bronze. The chill of terror began to spread over Elis, but in that instant there was a flash as of lightning in the depths, and the earnest face of a majestic woman appeared. Elis felt the delight in his heart growing and growing until it became almost a crushing dread. The old man had thrown his arm round him, and cried: 'Take care, Elis Frobom, that is the Queen, you can still look up.'

Involuntarily he turned his head and realized that the stars in the night sky were shining through a crack in the vault. A soft voice called his name as though in inconsolable sorrow. It was the voice of his mother. He thought he saw her figure through the crack overhead. But it was a lovely young woman who thrust her hand down through the crack and called his name. 'Carry me above,' he cried to the old man, 'I belong to the upper world with its friendly sky.' 'Take care,' muttered the old man, 'Frobom, be true to the Queen to whom you have surrendered.'

When the youth looked down again into the calm face of the majestic woman, he felt his whole being melting into the glittering stone. He screamed aloud in nameless terror, and woke from the wonderful dream whose beauty and horror found an echo deep in his soul.

'It had to be, I suppose,' said Elis to himself, when he had pulled himself together, 'I had to have such a curious dream. The old miner told me so much about the wonders of the underworld that my whole being is full of it, and in all my life I never had such strange feelings as now. Perhaps I am still dreaming. No, no—I must be ill, I will go out into the open, the fresh sea-breezes will cure me.'

He got up quickly and hurried down to the harbour where the merriment of the Honsung was just beginning again. But he soon noticed that he had no pleasure in anything, that he could not keep his mind on anything, that ideas, wishes he was unable to put into words, kept going through his head. He thought with deep sorrow about his dead mother, then it seemed to him that his one desire was to meet the girl who had spoken so kindly to him yesterday. Then he feared that if the girl came out of one of the lanes towards him it would prove to be the old miner of whom, in spite of himself, he was in dread. And yet he would gladly have heard from the old man more about the wonders of the mines.

He stood looking down into the water, these thoughts driving backwards and forwards through his head. And then it seemed as though

the silvery waves froze into a glittering glimmer in which the lovely great ships melted away, as though the dark clouds which were just gathering in the bright sky were sinking and turning into a vault of stone. He was back in the midst of his dream again, looking again into the earnest face of the majestic woman, and the disturbing anxiety and longing took hold of him anew.

His comrades shook him out of his dream to follow in their procession. But now he felt that an unknown voice was whispering ceaselessly in his ear: 'What, are you still here?—away—away—your home is in the mines of Falun. There you shall see all the glory of which you have dreamed—go, go to Falun!'—

For three days Elis Frobom wandered about the streets of Gothaborg, followed the whole time by the marvellous figures of his dream, exhorted all the time by the unknown voice.

On the fourth day Elis stood at the gate leading out of the town on the way to Gefle. A big man went through just ahead of him. Elis thought he recognized the old miner and was impelled to hurry after him, but he could not catch up with him.

Disquieted, he followed him.

Elis knew quite well that he was on the road to Falun, and that pacified him strangely, for he was certain that Fate had spoken to him through the voice of the old miner, and was now leading him to his destiny.

And certainly he noticed often that, when he was not quite sure which road to take, the old man suddenly appeared from behind



rocks or bushes and walked ahead of him for awhile without looking round, disappearing again quickly when the way became plain.

At last, after days of hard walking, Elis saw in the distance two large lakes, between which arose thick columns of steam. As he climbed higher and higher towards the west, he was able to make out in the smoke a few towers and black roofs. The old man stood gigantic before him, pointed with outstretched arm at this smoke and disappeared again amongst the rocks.

'This is Falun,' cried Elis, 'the goal of my journey.' He was right, for people who came up with him at that moment confirmed the fact that the town of Falun lay there between the two lakes, Runn and Warpann, and that he was then climbing Guffris Hill on which was the great pit-head of the mine.

Elis went cheerfully on, but when he reached the monstrous abyss leading to the underworld, the blood froze in his veins, and he remained rooted to the ground at the sight of the terrible destruction.

As is well known the great entrance to the mine of Falun is twelve hundred feet long, six hundred feet wide and one hundred and eighty feet deep. The dark-brown walls are vertical at first, then they slope away owing to enormous heaps of rubble and fragments. Both here and in the walls remains of the woodwork of old shafts are visible, strong, closely packed tree-trunks grooved together at one end in the same way as the walls of log cabins. No tree, no blade of grass grew amongst the bare, crumbling, stony

chasms and the jagged cliffs which were formed into strange shapes, sometimes like enormous stone beasts, sometimes like human forms of gigantic proportions. At the bottom lay in wild disorder stones, dross, burnt-out ore, and stupefying sulphur fumes rose eternally as though an infernal brew was always being prepared there, whose steam destroyed all the green things in Nature. One could believe that here Dante descended into the Inferno with all its desperate torments, all its horrors.

As Elis Frobom looked down into the chasm he remembered what an old helmsman on his ship had told him long ago. As he lay in a fever, he said, he felt suddenly that the sea had rolled away and left him looking down into a measureless pit in which he could see all the fearful creatures which live on the floor of the ocean writhing horribly amongst strange shell-fish and corals and wonderful stones, until with wide-open jaws they lay motionless in death. Such a sight, declared the old sailor, was a sign of a speedy death in the waves, and shortly afterwards he did fall accidentally from the deck into the sea and was not seen again. It was brought back to Elis's mind by the sight of the pit, which reminded him of the old helmsman's description of the pit into which he looked when the waters rolled back. The black stones and blue and red dross of the metal looked to him like horrible creatures stretching out their ugly polypus arms towards him. Just at that time some of the miners were climbing out of the depths, and in their dark working clothes with their black

faces they looked like hateful monsters trying laboriously to make themselves a road to the surface.

Elis felt himself shaken with horror, and, what had never happened to him at sea, a feeling of giddiness overcame him; it seemed to him that unseen hands were drawing him down into the abyss.

With closed eyes he stumbled away, and only when he was far from the pit-head, descending Guffris Hill, and looked up to the bright, sunny sky, did all his fear leave him. He breathed freely again, and cried from the depths of his soul: 'Oh, God, what are all the terrors of the ocean compared to the horror which inhabits that rocky chasm! Let the gale rage, let the black clouds sink to meet the raging waves, the beautiful, kindly sun very soon conquers them, and beneath his friendly rays the storm soon calms down, but those rays never pierce that black pit, and no soft spring breeze ever refreshes the air down there. No, I do not want to join you, you black earthworms, I could never accustom myself to your gloomy life!'

Elis decided to spend the night in Falun, and early the next morning to set out on his return to Gothaborg.

When he reached the market-place, the Helsingorget, he found a great crowd of people assembled.

A long procession of miners in festal attire, led by musicians, had just come to a halt in front of a stately house. A tall, slim, middle-aged man came out and looked round with a friendly

smile. One could recognize the true Dalecarlian from his upright carriage, open brow, and dark-blue, beaming eyes. The miners encircled him, to each one he gave a hearty handshake and a friendly word.

Elis made inquiries and found that this man was Pehrson Dahlsjö, engineer and owner of a fine Bergsfralse near Stora-Kopparberg. 'Bergsfralse' is the Swedish word for land granted for copper and silver mines. The owners of such Fralsen have shares in the mines for the workings of which they are responsible.

Elis was also told that it was the last day of the sitting of the court, and on that day it was usual for the miners to go in procession to the surveyor, the overseer, and the owners, and at each place to be entertained.

Looking at these fine, stately men with their open, friendly faces, he forgot the earthworms he had seen at the pit-head.

The evident happiness of these people, which seemed to break out afresh through the crowd when Pehrson Dahlsjö came out, was evidently something very different from the wild, mad merry-making of the sailors at the Honsung.

The heart of the quiet youth was deeply touched by the manner in which the miners took their pleasure. He felt indescribably happy, but he could hardly keep back his tears when some of the younger men began to sing an old song, a very simple but deeply moving melody in praise of mining.

When the song ended, Pehrson Dahlsjö threw open the doors of his house and all the miners

went in. Involuntarily Elis followed and stood on the threshold so that he could overlook the whole hall in which the miners were taking their places on benches. A large meal was spread out before them.

The door opposite Elis opened and a lovely girl in festal attire entered the hall. Tall and slim, with dark hair wound in many plaits round her head, her lovely dress fastened with rich clasps, she moved with the charm and grace of blooming youth. All the miners stood up and a quiet murmur ran through the rows: 'Ulla Dahlsjö—how God's blessing has descended on our excellent manager in that beautiful and good child.' The eyes of even the oldest miners sparkled as Ulla shook hands with them one after another and gave them friendly greeting. Then she fetched beautiful silver jugs and poured out such excellent beer as was at that time only to be found in Falun, and handed it to the guests, her face all the time beaming with innocent pleasure.

As Elis Frobom caught sight of the girl it seemed to him that a flash of lightning went through him and awakened again all the love, the joy, the ardour which he had thought dead. It was Ulla Dahlsjö who in that ominous dream had held out to him a helping hand; he thought now that he could understand the deeper meaning of that dream, and, forgetting the old miner, thanked the fate which had brought him to Falun.

But standing there on the threshold, he felt that he was an unnoticed stranger, miserable,

disconsolate and alone, and he wished that he had died before he saw Ulla Dahlsjö, for now he must perish miserably of love and longing. He could not bring himself to take his eyes off the girl, and as she passed quite close to him, he spoke her name in a shaky undertone. Ulla looked round and noticed poor Elis, who stood there with burning cheeks and downcast eyes—motionless—unable to utter a word.

Ulla went up to him and said with a sweet smile: 'Ah, you must be a stranger, dear friend! I can tell that by your sailor's clothes. But why are you standing there on the threshold? Come along in and enjoy yourself with us.' And she took him by the hand, drew him into the hall and, handing him a tankard of beer, said: 'Drink, dear friend, to your welcome.'

It seemed to Elis as though he were in the paradise of a glorious dream, from which he must awake to indescribable misery. He emptied the tankard mechanically. At that moment Pehrson Dahlsjö came up to him, shook him by the hand in friendly greeting and inquired whence he came and what had brought him to Falun.

The warmth of the noble liquor spread through Elis's veins. He grew courageous and cheerful as he gazed into the eyes of the gallant Pehrson, and explained how he, the son of a sailor, brought up to the sea from childhood, had just returned from the East Indies to find that his mother, whom he had kept in comfort with his wages, had died during his last voyage, so that he was now alone in the world, how repugnant the wild life of a sailor had become to him, that his

greatest longing was to become a miner and that he should try to get taken on as a miner at Falun. This last wish, so contrary to what he had felt but a few moments previously, was drawn from him involuntarily as though he had not been able to help saying it, almost as though he had expressed his deepest desires, desires in which he himself had not previously believed.

Pehrson Dahlsjö looked earnestly at the young man as though he wanted to read his inmost thoughts, then he said: 'I do not imagine, Elis Frobom, that sheer frivolity is driving you away from your previous occupation, or that you have not weighed carefully all the hardships and difficulties of a miner's life before making your decision. It is an old belief that the powerful elements in which a miner works destroy him unless he puts forth his whole strength to gain the mastery over them, and puts aside all other thoughts which might weaken the whole-hearted devotion he owes to his work in earth and fire. If you have really given careful thought to your desire and really wish to devote yourself to mining, then you have come at the right moment. I am short of workmen. You can, if you like, stay here now, and to-morrow morning go down the mine with the mine inspector who will show you your duties.'

The heart of Elis beat high at these words. He thought no more of the fear he had felt looking down into that horrible abyss of hell. He was filled with joy and delight at the thought of seeing the lovely Ulla every day; of living under the same roof with her; the sweetest hopes were his.

Pehrson Dahlsjo informed the assembled miners that a young man had just arrived who wished to apprentice himself to mining, and introduced Elis to them.

They all looked with pleasure on the vigorous youth, and said that he was a born miner with his fine, strong limbs, and that they doubted not that he had his share of diligence and piety.

One of the miners, an elderly man, approached Elis, and shaking him by the hand said that he was the chief inspector of Pehrson Dahlsjo's mine, and that he would make it his care to see that Elis was instructed in everything necessary. Elis had to sit by him, and over a tankard of beer the old man began to explain the work.

Elis suddenly remembered the old miner of Gothaborg, and was able to repeat almost everything the old man had said to him. 'Oh,' cried the inspector in astonishment, 'Elis Frobom, where did you learn all that? Why! there can be no doubt that in a short time you will be the best apprentice in the mine.'

The lovely Ulla, moving about amongst the guests and waiting on them, gave many friendly nods to Elis, and disposed him to be really happy. 'Now,' she said, 'you are no longer a stranger but belong here and not on the treacherous sea. Falun with its rich hills is your home.' Heaven itself opened before the young man's eyes at Ulla's words. It was noticed that Ulla liked to be near him, and that even Pehrson Dahlsjo in his quiet, earnest way looked on him with pleasure.

Elis's heart beat fast when he stood once more



by the smoking abyss, and clothed in his miner's outfit, the heavy iron-shod Dalecarlian shoes on his feet, went down for the first time into the mine with the inspector. At first the hot steam nearly suffocated him, then a cutting wind nearly extinguished the lamps they carried. Deeper and deeper they went, at last down a narrow iron ladder, and Elis Frobom discovered that all his dexterity in climbing learnt in the rigging of ships was of no use to him here.

At last they reached the deepest shaft, and the inspector showed Elis what he was to do.

Elis thought of the lovely Ulla; like a beautiful angel her form floated over him and he forgot all his horror of the depths, and all the difficulties of his work. He was certain that his dearest hopes could only be realized if he worked with all his might, with all the strength of which his body was capable, and so it happened that in a remarkably short time he was as good a worker as any in the mine.

Each day Pehrson Dahlsjö grew fonder of the hard-working quiet youth and often told him that he had found in him not only a good workman but also a well-loved son. Ulla also showed her feelings more and more openly. Often when Elis was going to his work and there was anything dangerous to be done, she begged him with tears in her eyes to guard himself against accident. And when he came back she ran joyfully to meet him and was always ready with the finest beer or some good thing to refresh him.

Elis's heart beat high with joy when one day

Pehrson Dahlsjo said to him that though he had brought no money with him, yet because of his activity and his economy he would certainly one day own a share in a mine or even become a mine owner, and then no owner in Falun would refuse his request if he begged for his daughter's hand. He longed to say how deeply he loved Ulla and that all his hopes were fixed on gaining her, but an unconquerable shyness and even more a doubt whether Ulla really loved him kept him from speaking.

One day Elis was working in the deepest shaft, the sulphur fumes so thick around him that his lamp gave out only a tiny glimmer and he could hardly distinguish the different strata in the rock. Suddenly he heard, as though from an even deeper shaft, a knocking as though somebody were using a pick. As such work is not possible in the depths, and Elis knew for certain that he was the only person who had come down that day, the inspector having sent the other men to work in another direction, there seemed to him something sinister in the sounds. He put down his tools and listened to the hollow sounds which seemed to come nearer and nearer. Then he noticed a dark shadow, and as a blast of cold air blew aside the sulphur fumes he saw the old miner of Gothaborg beside him. 'Good luck!' cried the old man, 'good luck, Elis Frobom, down here in the earth! Well—how do you like the work, comrade?' Elis wanted to ask him how he got into the shaft; but hitting the rock with his hammer with such force that sparks flew and the echo went through the shaft like

thunder, the old man shouted in a terrible voice: 'This is a wonderful trap-vein, but to you, you worthless, rascally good-for-nothing, it is only a Trumm, not worth a blade of grass. Down here you are nothing but a blind mole, to whom the Prince of metals will always be unfriendly, and up on the surface you dare attempt nothing. So you want to win Pehrson Dahlsjö's daughter as your wife, and for that reason work down here, neither caring for your work nor thinking about it? Take care, false creature, that the Prince of metals, whom you scorn, does not take you and throw you against the rocks until all your bones are broken. And Ulla shall never be your wife, I warn you!'

A furious anger rose in Elis at the insolent words of the old man. 'What are you doing here in my master's mine, where I work with all my strength, as is my duty? Go away as you came, or we'll see down here which of us will manage to brain the other.' With these words Elis took his stand in front of the old man and swung the iron hammer with which he had been working. The old man gave a mocking laugh, and a feeling of terror went through Elis as he watched him climb the narrow ladder like a squirrel and disappear into the darkness.

Elis felt paralysed, he could not work any longer, and so he followed the other out of the shaft. The old inspector, just then returning from the other shaft, noticed him, and cried: 'In heaven's name, what has happened to you, Elis, you are so deathly pale! Have the sulphur fumes, to which you are not yet accustomed,

upset you? Drink this, young man, that will help.' Elis took a long pull at the brandy bottle which the inspector held out to him, and, thus strengthened, related what had happened to him in the mine, also how he had made the acquaintance of the sinister old man in Gothaborg.

The inspector listened quietly, then he shook his head and said: 'Elis Frobom, that was old Torbern, and now I know that the story which is told about him is more than a fairy-tale. More than a hundred years ago there was here in Falun a miner named Torbern. He is said to have been one of the first to make a success of mining in Falun, and in his day the output was far richer than it is now. Nobody understood mining as Torbern did, his knowledge was so great that he was head of all the mining in Falun. He seemed to possess greater strength than anybody else, to know exactly where to find the richest veins, added to which he was a gloomy, serious man, without wife or child, even without a home in Falun, rarely coming up from the mine into the light of day, but always working in the depths, and so naturally the story soon began to get about that he was in alliance with the secret power which rules the underworld and makes the metals. In spite of Torbern's stern warnings that misfortune would follow unless the miners went to their work only from a feeling of real love for the wonderful minerals and metals, the mines were enlarged for the sake of gain, until at last on the Feast of St. John, in the year 1687, the terrible disaster occurred which opened the enormous chasm and wrecked the

mines so completely that only through great labour and much skill have some of the shafts been made workable again. Torbern was never seen again; it was thought that he was buried under the ruins. Soon afterwards, as the work improved, many of the diggers swore that they had seen old Torbern down the mines and that he had given them much good advice and pointed out to them some rich veins. Others had seen the old man wandering about the pit-head, sometimes lamenting, sometimes shouting angrily. Other youths have come here, as you have done, saying that an old miner had advised them to work in the mines and to come to Falun. That always happened when there was a shortage of labour, and was probably old Torbern's way of helping. If it was really old Torbern with whom you quarrelled in the mine, and if he spoke of a wonderful trap-vein, then there is certainly a rich vein of iron there, and to-morrow we will search for it. You know that here the iron-veins are called trap-veins, and that the 'Trumm' is a vein of that kind that splits into many pieces.'

When Elis, deep in thought, entered Pehrson Dahlsjö's house that day, Ulla did not come as usual to meet him. With lowered gaze, and, as Elis thought, eyes red with weeping, Ulla sat there, and by her side a handsome young man who held her hand fast in his was trying to cheer her up by his merry talk of which Ulla did not appear to be taking much notice. Elis stared at the couple, a horrid fear taking hold of him, till Pehrson Dahlsjö drew him aside into another room and said: 'Now, Elis Frobom, you will

soon be able to show your love to me, and your faithfulness, for I have always looked upon you as a son, and soon you will be that completely. That man is the rich merchant Eric Olawsen of Gothaborg. He has my consent to marry my daughter; they will go to Gothaborg and you will then be alone here with me, my only support in my old age. Why, Elis, have you nothing to say? You blench: I hope my plans do not upset you, and that you will not wish to leave me as well! but I hear Eric Olawsen calling me—I must go!

And Pehrson went back into the other room.

Elis felt as though thousands of sharp knives were being driven into his heart. He could not speak, tears would not come. In wild despair he rushed out of the house—away—away—to the pit-head. If the enormous chasm was terrifying by daylight, how much more awful was it now that night had fallen and the moon was just rising to look down upon the rocks, which seemed more than ever like a restless crowd of horrible monsters, ghastly fiends moving about on the smoking floor, their terrible eyes flashing upwards and their gigantic claws stretching ever towards the world of man.

‘Torbern—Torbern,’ called Elis with a dreadful voice which echoed through the desolate chasm, ‘Torbern—here I am!—You were right, I have been a rascally sort of worker, and given myself over to stupid hopes in the world above ground. Down there lies my treasure, my life, my all! Torbern!—come down with me, show me the richest trap-veins, there I will work and

dig, and never more see the light of day. Torbern! Torbern!—come down with me!"

Elis took steel and flint out of his pocket, lit his lamp and descended to the shaft where he had been working, but the old man did not appear. But how surprised he was in the deepest shaft to see the trap-vein, clear and distinct, so that he could even distinguish the streaks and faults in it.

As he looked more and more closely at the wonderful vein in the rock, it seemed as though a blinding light lit up the whole shaft and its walls became as transparent as pure crystal. The ominous dream which he had dreamt in Gothaborg came back to him. He looked again into the heavenly regions where grew lovely metal trees and plants whose fruit and flowers were precious stones. He saw the maidens, he gazed again into the noble face of the mighty Queen. She caught hold of him, drew him down, pressed him to her breast, a thrill of wonder went through him and he was conscious only of feeling that he was swimming in a blue, transparent, sparkling mist.

"Elis Frobom, Elis Frobom!" cried a strong voice from above, and the light of torches flooded the shaft. Pehrson Dahlsjo himself had come with the inspector who had seen Elis rushing like one possessed towards the pit-head.

They found him standing motionless, his face pressed to the cold stone.

"What are you doing here by night, you rash young man?" cried Pehrson. "Pull yourself together, and come up with us; who knows what good news you will hear up there!"

In deep silence Elis followed Pehrson Dahlsjo, who continued to scold him for running into such danger.

It was already broad daylight when they reached the house. With a loud cry Ulla threw herself into Elis's arms, and called him by the sweetest names. But Pehrson spoke to Elis: 'You fool! do you suppose that I have not known for a long time that you love Ulla, and that all your work for me was for her sake? Have I not also known for a long time that Ulla loves you from the bottom of her heart? Could I wish for a better son-in-law, a more hard-working, honest miner than you, my brave Elis? But your silence angered me, hurt me.'

'But did we know,' Ulla interrupted her father, 'how much we loved each other?'

'Let that be as it will,' went on Pehrson, 'it annoyed me that Elis was not open and honest with me about his love for you, and because I wanted to try you also, I invented the fairy-tale about Eric Olawsen yesterday, which soon brought you to your senses. You foolish man! Eric Olawsen has long been married, and to you, Elis Frobom, I give my daughter, for, I repeat, I could not wish a better son-in-law.'

Tears of joy ran down Elis's cheeks. So much happiness had come so unexpectedly upon him that it seemed to him he was again in the midst of a wonderful dream.

By Pehrson Dahlsjo's orders the miners assembled at midday for a feast. Ulla had put on her finest attire and looked more lovely than ever, so that everybody exclaimed: 'Ah, what



a lovely bride our brave Elis Frohom has won! Now may heaven bless them both!

The horror of the previous night was still to be seen on Elis's pale face, and he often stood staring straight before him as though far removed from what was going on around him.

'What is the matter, my Elis?' asked Ulla. Elis held her tight in his arms and said: 'Yes, yes! you are really mine, and now everything will be right.'

Yet in the midst of his joy it sometimes seemed to Elis as though an ice-cold hand were laid on him and a dark voice said: 'Have you everything you desire now that you have won Ulla? Poor fool! Have you not looked on the face of the Queen?'

He was nearly overcome by an unspeakable dread, the thought was ever with him that one of the miners would rise before him, a gigantic figure, and he would recognize Torbern, come to remind him in terrible form of that underground kingdom of stone and metal to which he had made his submission.

And yet he had no idea why the ghostly old man was so hostile to him, what indeed mining had to do with his love for Ulla.

Pehrson noticed Elis's strange behaviour and put it down to the pain he had suffered and to the night in the mine. Not so Ulla who, filled with secret dread, pressed her lover to tell her what horrible experience it was that he had suffered, which cut her off so completely. Elis felt that his heart would break. In vain he tried to tell his loved one of the marvellous sight he

had seen in the mine. It was as though an unknown power was forcibly shutting his mouth, as though the terrible face of the Queen was looking at him, and if he spoke her name, then, as at the sight of the head of Medusa, everything around would turn to stone. All that loveliness which down the mine had filled him with the deepest ecstasy seemed now to be a hell of desperate misery tricked out for his temptation.

Pehrson Dahlsjo ordered Elis to stay at home for a few days in order to recover from the illness from which he seemed to be suffering. During this time the love which shone forth bright and clear from Ulla's childlike and pure heart overcame any remembrance of that ominous adventure in the mine. Elis revived completely in this atmosphere of love and happiness, and believed firmly that no evil power had any further influence over him.

When next he went down the mine everything seemed different to him. The most wonderful seams lay opened before his eyes, he worked with redoubled vigour, he forgot everything; when he reached the surface again he had to force himself to remember Pehrson Dahlsjo and even his Ulla; he felt as though he were divided in two, as though his real, his better self remained down in the depths of the earth, resting in the arms of the Queen, while the rest of him sought his unhappy couch in Falun. If Ulla spoke to him of their love and how happily they would live together he began to talk about the wonders of the mine, the priceless treasures which lay hidden there, and became so involved in such

marvellous and unintelligible descriptions that the poor girl was overcome with fear and anxiety and could not understand how Elis had suddenly changed so completely.

Elis often told the mine inspector of the wonderful seams he had found, and when the miners could find nothing but barren rock, he laughed ironically and said that of course he alone understood the secret signs, the momentous writing which the Queen herself engraved on the stone, and it was really sufficient to understand these signs without making clear what the meaning was.

The old inspector looked sadly at the young man talking, with wild, glittering eyes, of the wonderful paradise buried deep in the earth.

'Oh, sir,' he whispered softly into Pehrson Dahlsjö's ear, 'the wicked Torbern has bewitched the young man.'

'Don't believe such old miner's yarns, old man,' answered Pehrson Dahlsjö. 'Love has turned his head, that is all. Wait till the wedding is over, then there will be an end of these stories of rich seams and treasures and underground paradises.'

The day Pehrson Dahlsjö had appointed for the wedding came round at last. Days beforehand Elis Frobom was quieter, graver, more retiring than ever, but more in love with Ulla. He could not bear to be parted from her for an instant and for that reason he did not go to the mines; he appeared to have forgotten his strange behaviour and no word of the underground kingdom crossed his lips. Ulla was full of joy,

she had lost her fear that the threatening powers of the underworld, of which she had heard old miners speak, should lure her Elis to destruction. And Pehrson Dahlsjö said laughingly to the old inspector: 'There, you see, it was only love for Ulla which turned Elis Frobom's head.'

Early on the wedding morning—it was mid-summer day—Elis knocked on his bride's door. She opened it and started back in terror when she saw Elis already dressed for the wedding, but deathly pale and with dark flaming eyes. 'I only want', he said in a light, unsteady voice, 'to tell you, my beloved Ulla, that we are standing on the brink of the greatest happiness which human beings can experience on earth. It has all been revealed to me to-night. Down at the bottom of the mine, buried in chloride and mica, lies the cherry-red, sparkling almandine on which our life-lines are engraved. I must fetch that to give you as a wedding-present. It is more lovely than the finest blood-red carbuncle, and when, knit together by our great love, we look into its beaming light, we shall be able to see clearly how our inner life is bound up with that wonderful branch which grows out of the heart of the Queen at the centre of the world. It is only necessary for me to bring this stone up to the light of day, and that I will do now. Take care of yourself in the meantime, my beloved Ulla!—I shall soon be back.'

With tears in her eyes Ulla begged her lover to refrain from this chimerical undertaking, for she had a foreboding of great misfortune; but Elis assured her that without the stone he would

never again have peace, and that there could be no question of danger. He embraced her fervently and left her.

The guests had assembled to accompany the bride and bridegroom to the Kopparberg church where the wedding was to take place. A crowd of gaily dressed girls who, according to the custom of the country, were to lead the bride to the church, were laughing and joking round Ulla. The musicians finished tuning up and began a gay wedding march. It was nearly midday, and there was still no sign of Elis. Suddenly a crowd of miners rushed in, anxiety and horror in their pale faces, and announced that a terrible landslide had destroyed Dahlsjo's mine completely.

'Elis—my Elis—dead—dead!' Ulla shrieked and fell unconscious. Now for the first time Pehrson heard from the inspector that in the early morning Elis had gone to the pit-head and descended the mine, where he was quite alone, for all the others had been invited to the wedding. The miners hurried out, but all search was hopeless. No trace of Elis Frobom was found. It was certain that he was buried under the fall: and so misery and sorrow entered the house of Pehrson Dahlsjo in that moment when he had thought to assure himself peace and quiet for his old age.

The brave mine owner Pehrson Dahlsjo had long been dead, his daughter Ulla long vanished, nobody in Falun knew anything of them any more, for more than fifty years had elapsed since Elis Frobom's unlucky wedding-day. Then it

happened one day that miners trying a cross-cut between two shafts deep down found the body of a young miner in vitriolic water. When they brought it to the surface it appeared to have been turned to stone.

To the onlookers the youth seemed to be in a deep sleep, the features were so well preserved; there was no sign of decay about the festal attire which he wore, even the flowers in his button-hole seemed quite fresh. Everybody in the neighbourhood gathered at the pit-head where the youth had been carried, but nobody recognized his face and none of the miners remembered one of their number having disappeared. They were just about to carry the corpse to Falun when there appeared in the distance an old woman hobbling along on crutches. 'Here comes the old midsummer woman!' cried some of the miners. The old crone had received this name from the fact that for many years on midsummer day she had appeared out of nowhere, gazed down the mine-shaft, and, wringing her hands, crept sighing and moaning round the pit-head before disappearing again.

Hardly had the old woman caught sight of the youth than she let fall both her crutches and raising her arms to heaven cried in tones of heart-rendingsorrow: 'Oh, Elis Frobom—oh, my dear love.' And kneeling beside the corpse she seized the stiff hands and pressed them to her breast in which, like a holy flame under a covering of ice, there beat a heart full of passionate love. 'Ah,' she said at last, 'none, none of you remember poor Ulla Dahlsjö who, fifty

years ago, was the happy bride of this youth. When in misery and sorrow I left Falun and went to Ornas, old Torbern comforted me and promised me that I should see my Elis, who was buried by a fall of stone on our wedding-day, again on this earth, and so, year after year, filled with longing and true love, I have come and gazed down into the pit. And to-day I have seen him! Oh, my Elis—my beloved!

And she threw her thin arms round the youth and held him as though she would never let him go, while the people stood, deeply moved, around her.

Fainter and fainter came the old woman's sobs and moans until at last they ceased altogether.

The miners drew near; they wanted to lift her away, but she had breathed her last over the corpse of her bridegroom. Then the onlookers noticed that the corpse that they had thought turned to stone was beginning to turn to dust.

In the Kopparberg church where, fifty years before, the couple should have been married, his dust was laid to rest beside the body of his faithful bride.

# THE BEGGAR-WOMAN OF LOCARNO

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HEINRICH VON KLEIST

(1777-1811)



## THE BEGGAR-WOMAN OF LOCARNO

At the foot of the Alps, near Locarno in Upper Italy, stood once a castle, the property of a marquis; of this castle, as one goes southward from the St. Gotthard, one sees now only the ashes and ruins. In one of its high and spacious rooms there once lay, on a bundle of straw which had been thrown down for her, an old, sick woman, who had come begging to the door, and had been taken in and given shelter out of pity by the mistress of the castle. The Marquis, returning from the hunt, happened to enter this room, where he usually kept his guns, while the old woman lay there, and angrily ordered her to come out of the corner where the bundle of straw had been placed and to get behind the stove. In rising the old woman slipped on the polished floor and injured her spine severely; so much did she hurt herself that only with unspeakable agony could she manage to cross the room, as she was ordered, to sink moaning behind the stove and there to die.

Some years later the Marquis, owing to war and bad harvests, having lost most of his fortune, decided to sell his estates. One day a nobleman from Florence arrived at the castle which, on account of its beautiful situation, he wished to buy. The Marquis, who was very anxious to bring the business to a successful conclusion, gave instructions to his wife to prepare for their guest the above-mentioned room, which was now very

beautifully furnished. But imagine their horror when, in the middle of the night, the nobleman, pale and distracted, entered their room, solemnly assuring them that his room was haunted by something which was not visible, but which sounded as if somebody lying on straw in one corner of the room got up and slowly and feebly but with distinct steps crossed the room to lie down moaning and groaning behind the stove.

The Marquis, horrified, he did not himself know why, laughed with forced merriment at the nobleman and said he would get up at once and keep him company for the rest of the night in the haunted room. But the nobleman begged to be allowed to spend the rest of the night in another room, and when the morning came he ordered his horses to be brought round, bade farewell, and departed.

This incident, which created a great sensation, unhappily for the Marquis frightened away several would-be buyers; and when amongst his own servants strangely and mysteriously the rumour arose that queer things happened in the room at midnight, he determined to make a definite stand in the matter and to investigate it himself the same night. For that reason he had his bed moved into the room at twilight, and watched there without sleeping until midnight. To his horror, as the clock began to strike midnight, he became aware of the mysterious noise; it sounded as though somebody rose from straw which rustled beneath him, crossed the room, and sank down sighing and groaning behind the stove. The next morning when he

came downstairs his wife inquired what he had discovered; he looked round with nervous and troubled glances, and after fastening the door assured her that the rumour was true. The Marquise was more terrified than ever in her life, and begged him, before the rumour grew, to make a cold-blooded trial in her company. Accompanied by a loyal servant, they spent the following night in the room and heard the same ghostly noises; and only the pressing need to get rid of the castle at any cost enabled the Marquise in the presence of the servant to smother the terror which she felt, and to put the noise down to some ordinary and casual event which it would be easy to discover. On the evening of the third day, as both of them, with beating hearts, went up the stairs to the guest-room, anxious to get at the cause of the disturbance, they found that the watch-dog, who happened to have been let off his chain, was standing at the door of the room; so that, without giving a definite reason, both perhaps unconsciously wishing to have another living thing in the room besides themselves, they took him into the room with them. About eleven o'clock the two of them, two candles on the table, the Marquise fully dressed, the Marquis with dagger and pistol which he had taken from the cupboard beside him, sat down one on each bed; and while they entertained one another as well as they could by talking, the dog lay down, his head on his paws, in the middle of the room and slept. As the clock began to strike midnight the horrible sound

began; somebody whom human eyes could not see raised himself on crutches in the corner of the room; the straw could be heard rustling beneath him; and at the first step the dog woke, pricked up his ears, rose from the ground growling and barking, and, just as though somebody were making straight for him, moved backwards towards the stove. At the sight the Marquise, her hair rising, rushed from the room, and while the Marquis, who had snatched up his dagger, called 'Who is there?' and received no answer, she, like a mad woman, had ordered the coach to be got out, determined to drive away to the town immediately. But before she had packed a few things together and got them out of the door she noticed that all round her the castle was in flames. The Marquis, overcome with horror, and tired of life, had taken a candle and set fire to the wooden panelling on all sides. In vain she sent people in to rescue the wretched man; he had already found his end in the most horrible manner possible; and his white bones, gathered together by his people, still lie in that corner of the room from which he once ordered the beggar-woman of Locarno to rise.

# LIFE'S LUXURIES

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LUDWIG TIECK

(1773-1853)

## LIFE'S LUXURIES

TOWARDS the end of February, in one of the hardest winters in the early part of the century, an odd occurrence took place, concerning the origin, sequence, and pacification of which the strangest and most contradictory rumours were in circulation in the Residence. It is natural that when everybody begins to talk about and narrate matters of which they know neither the cause nor the actual events, even the commonplace should take on a romantic tinge.

The affair happened in one of the narrowest streets of a fairly populous suburb. First it was rumoured that a traitor and rebel had been discovered and arrested by the police, then that an atheist, who with fellow atheists was working to tear out Christianity by the roots, had surrendered to the authorities after a determined opposition and was now in solitary confinement, that in solitude he might find nobler principles and opinions. But at first he had defended himself with an old arquebus and even with a cannon, so that blood was flowing before he surrendered, and therefore the consistory as well as the criminal police would demand his execution. A politically inclined shoemaker knew for a fact that the prisoner was an emissary who, as head of many secret societies, was intimately connected with all the revolutionaries of Europe: that he had gathered all the threads in Paris, London, and Spain and joined them to those from the

eastern provinces, and his arrest had happened only just in time to prevent the outbreak of an immense rising in Further India which would have spread, like the cholera, over Europe, and set all the inflammable material everywhere alight.

This much was certain: there had been an uproar in a small house, the police had been fetched, a noisy crowd had collected, important people had been seen taking part, and after a time all was quiet again without anybody knowing what the cause of the disturbance had been. A certain amount of damage in the house could not fail to be noticed. Everybody explained the affair according to his own mood or fantasy. Joiners and carpenters repaired the damage later.

The man who lived in the house was unknown in the neighbourhood. Was he a scholar? a politician? a native? a stranger? Nobody, not even the most knowing, could give a definite answer.

This much was certain, the unknown lived a quiet and retired life; he was never seen out walking or in any public place: he was still young, well educated, and the young wife who shared his solitude could be called beautiful.

It was about Christmas-time when this young man, sitting close to the stove in their tiny room, spoke thus to his wife: 'You know, dearest Clara, how much I love and honour Jean Paul's *Siebenkäs*: but it remains a puzzle to me how he would get his humorist out of his difficulties if he were in our place. All our expedients seem to be at an end now, don't they, dearest?'

'Certainly they do, Henry,' she answered, laughing and sighing at the same time, 'but if you remain happy and jolly, dearest of men, I cannot feel unhappy when you are present.'

'Unhappiness and happiness are only empty words,' answered Henry. 'When you left your parents' house to follow me and so generously forgot all considerations for my sake, our fate was decided for life. To live and to love became our watchword; how we should live could be a matter of indifference to us. And so, from a full heart, I should still like to ask: 'Who in all Europe is as happy as I, with every right and all the strength of my consciousness, can call myself?'

'We have to do without almost everything,' she said, 'but we have each other, and I knew when I married you that you were not rich; you also were not ignorant of the fact that I could bring nothing with me from my parents' house. So poverty has become one with our love, and this tiny room, our talk, our glances, gazing into each other's eyes, is our life.'

'True,' cried Henry, springing up happily to embrace his beautiful wife. 'What a troubled, eternally separated, lonely, and preoccupied life we should be living now in fashionable circles if everything had gone as it should have done. One could train animals or marionettes to make just such compliments and to converse as is done in those circles. And we, my darling, are here like Adam and Eve, in our paradise, and no angel has the superfluous conceit to come and drive us out.'



'Only,' she murmured, 'our store of firewood is nearly ended, and I have never known so hard a winter.'

Henry laughed. 'Look,' he said, 'I have to laugh from pure mischief, but it is not yet the laughter of despair, but of a certain embarrassment, because I simply do not know where to get money. But of course the means will be found, for is it possible to think that we shall die of cold with our great love and our warm blood? Absolutely impossible!'

She gave him a tender smile and answered, 'If only, like Lenette, I had brought clothes with me that I could sell, or if unnecessary brass cans and mortars or copper kettles were lying about in our little home, then it would be easy to know what to do.'

'You are right,' he said in a playful tone, 'if we were millionaires like that Siebenkäs, it would not be a conjuring trick to procure more firewood or even better nourishment.'

She looked into the oven where some bread was cooking in water, to see if it was ready for their scanty meal; as an added luxury they would have a little butter. 'While you are occupied in superintending the cooking of our meal and giving the cook the necessary orders,' said Henry, 'I will go back to my studies. How gladly would I write again were ink, paper, and pens not completely missing: and how gladly would I read again, anything, had I but a book.'

'Then you must think, dearest,' said Clara, glancing roguishly across at him. 'I hope your thoughts are not missing also.'

'Dearest wife,' he replied, 'our establishment is so large, it must need all your attention; do not let your thoughts be distracted, for fear our domestic arrangements get in a muddle. And as I am now going to withdraw into my library, please leave me in peace; for I must increase my store of knowledge and give my brain nourishment.'

'He is unique,' said his wife to herself, and laughed happily. 'And how handsome he is.'

'I shall read again extracts from my diary that I wrote in the past,' said Henry, 'and I find it interesting to study it backwards, beginning at the end, in this way preparing myself for the beginning, which I shall thus understand much better. All true knowledge, all art, and all real thought must join in a circle, beginning and end intimately united, like a serpent biting its tail—a symbol of eternity as some say; a symbol of knowledge and all truth I affirm.'

He began to read from the last page, but only half aloud: 'There is a fable that a mad criminal, condemned to death by starvation, ate himself bit by bit; after all, that is only a fable of the life of every man. In the first case only the stomach and the teeth remained, in our case the Soul, as the incomprehensible is called. In the same way, as far as outward things go, I also have stripped myself and died. It was almost ludicrous that when I never went out I should have a dress suit with all its appurtenances. On my wife's birthday I shall appear before her in my shirt-sleeves, for it is unbecoming to appear in so shabby a coat before a lady who has been presented at Court.'

'The page and the book both end there,' said Henry. 'The whole world agrees that our dress clothes are a silly and tasteless mode, every one grumbles at them, but nobody except me is in earnest about getting rid of them completely. And I shall not even find out from the newspapers whether other thinkers are following my bold example and precedent.'

He turned back, and read the preceding page. 'It is possible to live without table-napkins. When I think how full of makeshift and substitution life now is, I feel an absolute hatred for these greedy and stingy times, and form a resolution, which I have no difficulty in keeping, to live after the manner of our more open-handed ancestors. These wretched dinner-napkins, as even the Englishman of to-day realizes, were obviously only invented to save the table-cloth. And if it is magnanimous not to pay any attention to the table-cloth, then I am prepared to go further and say that both table-cloth and napkins are superfluous. Both will be sold in order that *we may eat from a clean table, in the manner of the Patriarchs, in the manner of—well? which people?* It does not matter! Many people never use even a table for meals. And as I say, I am not banishing these things from the house from any feeling of cynical parsimony in the manner of Diogenes, but on the contrary from a feeling of well-being, in order not to become like the present age, through foolish economy a spendthrift.'

'You were right,' said his wife laughing, 'when you wrote that we were living lavishly on the

proceeds of those superfluous things. Sometimes we had even two basins.'

Husband and wife sat down to their poor meal. An onlooker would have thought them to be envied, they were so happy, so gay, at their frugal dinner-table. When the bread soup was finished Clara, with a mischievous look, fetched a covered plate from the oven and set before her astonished husband a few potatoes. 'Ah!' he cried, 'that is what I call preparing a pleasant surprise for one who is satiated with the study of many books. These good potatoes took their part in the revolutionizing of Europe. Long live the hero Walter Raleigh!'—They clinked their tumblers of water, and Henry looked to see if their enthusiasm had caused the tumblers to crack. 'The wealthiest princes of antiquity would have envied us this amazing ingenuity, this contrivance of ordinary glass tumblers. It must have been dull to drink from a golden horn, particularly beautiful, clear, health-giving water. But in our glasses the refreshing liquid sways in such serene transparency, so at one with the beaker, that one is really tempted to think one is enjoying liquefied ether itself.—Our meal is finished. Let us embrace.'

'We might for a change', said she, 'move our chairs over to the window.'

'We have certainly sufficient room,' said Henry, 'an absolute racecourse, when one thinks of the cages which Louis XI had built for suspects. It is incredible how much happiness there is in being able to move one's hands and feet as one wishes. Certainly we are not in

chains if we think of the desires which our spirit often conceives: the soul, heaven only knows how, has hopped on to the limed twig which holds us fast and from which we cannot flutter free, and we and the twig have become so bound together that we sometimes mistake our prison for our better selves.'

'Not so melancholy,' said Clara, taking his beautifully shaped hand in her soft, slim fingers; 'look rather at the wonderful ice-flowers with which the frost has decorated our windows. My aunt always declared that a room was warmer when its windows were covered with a thick coating of frost than when the panes were clear.'

'That may be so,' said Henry, 'but my faith is not strong enough to make fires unnecessary. The windows might eventually become so thickly coated with ice as to decrease the size of our room, and the famous Ice Palace of St. Petersburg would grow up around us. But let us rather live as citizens than as princes.'

'How wonderfully these flowers are designed,' cried Clara, 'in what variety! I can imagine I have seen them all in reality, though I am quite unable to name them. And look, one often covers the other, and the marvellous leaves appear to grow as we talk of them.'

'I wonder,' said Henry, 'if botanists have already studied, sketched, and discussed this flora in their learned books? If these flowers and leaves repeat themselves according to definite rules, or are continually changing? Your sweet breath has called these flower-spirits up

out of a long dead past, and while sweet and lovely fantasies pass through your mind, a humorous genius sketches your ideas and feelings here in these flower-phantoms like the writing in an old album of one long dead, and I can read here how true you are, how devoted to me, how you are thinking of me, though I am sitting beside you.'

'Very polite, my dear sir!' she made friendly reply. 'You might give a learned and profound explanation of these ice-flowers in that way, just as we have too learned and elegant annotations of the outlines of Shakespeare's plays.'

'Be silent, dear heart,' replied her husband, 'do not let us touch on that subject.—Now that we have feasted, I will begin studying my diary backwards. This monologue already teaches me something of myself, how much more will it do so in the future when I am an old man. Is a diary anything more than a monologue? Yes, a real artist could make of it a dialogue. We hear too rarely this second voice in ourselves. Naturally! There is hardly one in a thousand who in reality hears and notices that second voice and its answers when they run contrary to that which the speaker with his questions wishes to hear.'

'Very true,' remarked Clara, 'and for that reason marriage in its truest sense was founded. The woman has in her love that second answering voice, the real countersign of the spirit. And, believe me, what you in your masculine arrogance call our silliness, or short-sightedness, lack of philosophy, inability to penetrate into reality,

and other such phrases, is often the true spiritual dialogue, the completion or the harmonic fulfilment of your spiritual secrets. But certainly, most men delight only in a resounding echo and that which they call the voice of Nature, the voice of the soul, is only the echo of foolish phrases. That is in fact often their idea of the womanly with which they fall hopelessly in love.'

'My angel,' shouted the young husband enthusiastically, 'we understand one another: our love is true marriage, and you lighten and complete that part of me where there is want or darkness. If these are oracles, mind and attention must not be wanting to receive and explain them.' A long embrace ended and elucidated this speech.

'A kiss,' said Henry, 'is just such an oracle. Can there ever have been people who could think intelligently whilst kissing fervently?'

Clara laughed aloud, then became suddenly serious and said in a rather disheartened, almost pitying tone: 'Ah yes, that is the mistake we often make with servants, housekeepers, stable-boys, and grooms to whom we often owe so much. If we are mentally or even hilariously excited, we despise or laugh at them. My father once jumped his black horse over a broad ditch, and everybody shouted with amazement and the ladies all clapped their hands. Only an old groom standing near by shook his head. The man was stiff and awkward, and with his long pigtail and red nose altogether a comic figure.

"Well," shouted my father angrily to him, "what have you got to find fault with this time?"

'The straightforward old man did not lose his composure, but replied quietly: "In the first place, your Excellency did not give your horse his head sufficiently because you were afraid of being thrown, so the jump was not sufficiently free: secondly, the horse deserves as much praise as you do, and thirdly, if I had not exercised that horse day after day and made him understand what was expected of him, which is only possible if a man is not afraid of boredom, and can practise patience, neither your courage nor the willingness of the horse would have got you over that ditch." "You are right, old man," said my father, and ordered a large gift to be made to him. So it is with us. We dare not dream, dare not give ourselves up to our feelings and presentiments, our imagination and wit, until all these horses have been schooled. If rider or horse is still a dilettante and tries a dangerous jump, then to the horror or amusement of the audience the result is bound to be a fall.'

'True,' remarked Henry, 'the history of our time confirms that in many a fanatic and poet. There are poets who, having mounted from the wrong side, yet make a harmless attempt to bring off a difficult jump. Oh, your father.'

Clara gave him a look of sympathy, which he found irresistible.

'Yes, father,' he said, half annoyed, 'with that one word much is said. And what do you expect from me? You were capable of abandoning him, much as you loved him.'

They had both become serious. 'I will go on with my researches,' said the young man at last,



and taking up the diary again he turned over a page. He read aloud: 'To-day I sold to the avaricious bookseller my rare copy of Chaucer, that old and valuable Caxton edition. My friend, my beloved, noble Andreas Vandelmeer gave it to me in our youth on that birthday which we celebrated at the university. He had ordered it specially from London, paid a great price for it, and then had it bound according to his own design, embellished with rich and beautiful Gothic decorations. The old skinflint gave me little enough for it, but no doubt sent it back to England and got more than ten times as much. If only I had cut out the page on which I had written not only the story of the gift but also our present address. That will now go to London or into some rich man's library. I am annoyed about that. And the fact that I let that precious volume go so easily and so much below its value almost makes me believe that I am really poor or in need; for, without doubt, this book was the dearest thing I ever possessed, and such a memento of him, of my only friend. O Andreas Vandelmeer! Are you still living? Where are you now? Do you still think of me?'

'I saw your grief,' said Clara, 'when you sold the book, but of him, this friend of your youth, you have never told me anything.'

'A youth,' said Henry, 'like me, but rather older, and much more mature. We knew one another already in our school-days, and I can say that he pursued me with his friendship and pressed it passionately upon me. He was wealthy, but despite his wealth and his rather effeminate

upbringing, very kind and far from being an egotist. He complained that I did not return his passion, that my friendship was too cool and did not satisfy him. We were at the university together and shared rooms. He desired that I should give him the opportunity to make sacrifices on my behalf; for he had more than he needed and my father could only afford to keep me in moderate circumstances. When we returned to the Residence, he conceived the idea of going to the East Indies, for he was quite independent. His desires drew him to those marvellous countries; there he would learn, look, satisfy his burning thirst for knowledge and the exotic. Then followed unending entreaties, prayers that I should accompany him; he assured me that I should and must make my fortune there, and that he would help me to do so; for he had inherited great possessions there from his ancestors. But my mother died, and during her last days I was able to repay some of her love to me; my father was ill, and I could not share in the desires of my friend; and, besides, I had not the necessary knowledge, I had not learnt the languages, which, owing to his love for the East, were so easy to him. He had relations still living there whom he intended to visit. Through friends and patrons my wish was fulfilled, and I was given a post in the diplomatic service. With the means left me by my mother I was able to settle down in a position suited to my career, and I left my father, for whose recovery there was little hope. My friend insisted that I should give him part of my capital;

he would speculate with it in those distant lands, and on his return pay it back with interest. I could not help thinking that this was only a pretext to enable him to make me a considerable present without hurting my feelings. And so I came in the ambassador's suite to the town where you lived and there you know how matters developed for me.'

'And you have never heard anything more of this excellent Andreas?' asked Clara.

'Two letters reached me from those distant lands,' answered Henry, 'later I heard from an unauthenticated source that he had died of cholera. So he was snatched away from me, my father was dead; I was thrown completely upon myself.

'But I enjoyed the favour of my ambassador. I was not unpopular at Court, I could reckon on powerful patrons—and that has all now disappeared.'

'Ah, yes,' said Clara, 'you sacrificed everything for me, and my own people have cast me off for ever.'

'So much the more necessary is it that love should compensate us,' said her husband; 'and so it does; for our honeymoon, as prosaic people call it, has lasted now well over a year.'

'But your beautiful book,' said Clara, 'your wonderful poetry! If only we had kept at least a copy of it. How we should have delighted in it these long winter evenings. Truly,' she added with a sigh, 'we should have needed a light.'

'Let well alone, Clara,' her husband comforted her, 'we can chatter, and that is better;

I hear the tones of your voice, you sing to me, or you even break into a heavenly laugh. Never in my life have I heard such tones as there are in your laughter. There is such pure joy, such divine exultation, and yet such a fine and sincerely moving emotion in these sounds of amusement and merriment, that I listen enchanted and at the same time think and brood over it. For, my tender angel, there are occasions and moods when one is startled, yes, even horrified, by somebody whom one has known for a long time, when he breaks out into a laugh which comes right from the heart and which we have never heard before. That has happened to me even in the case of charming young girls who until then have pleased me. As in many hearts an angel slumbers unawares, waiting only for the guardian angel to awaken him, so there often sleeps, though deep down, in gracious and amiable people a quite vulgar tendency, that wakes from its dreams when suddenly something comic breaks with full force into the most secret chambers of the heart.

'Instinct tells us then that there is something in such people of which we must beware. Oh, how significant, how characteristic is a laugh! Yours, dear heart, I would I could describe poetically.'

'But we must take care not to be unjust,' she reminded him. 'Too accurate observation of mankind leads easily to misanthropy.'

'That that thoughtless young bookseller went bankrupt and disappeared into the unknown with my wonderful manuscript is certainly an-

other addition to our happiness. How easily might our connexion with him, the published book, the gossip about it in the town, have drawn the attention of the curious to us here. Your father and your family have certainly not yet given up their pursuit of us; they would have examined my passport again and more thoroughly, they would have begun to suspect that I was using a false name, and because I am helpless, and have incurred the anger of my government by my flight, they would have separated us, sending you back to your people and involving me in a complicated lawsuit.'

It had by this time grown dark and the fire had burnt out, so the two happy young people retired to their couch in the narrow little chamber. Here they felt nothing of the ever-increasing, benumbing frost or of the showers of sleet which dashed up against the window. Happy dreams hovered round them, they were surrounded by good fortune, comfort, and pleasure in a beautiful country, and when they awoke from this pleasant illusion, reality was still more pleasant. They went on talking and put off the moment of getting out of bed and dressing, because frost and trouble awaited them. In the meantime day broke, and Clara busied herself in the tiny room, trying to waken sparks in the ashes to start the fire again. Henry helped her, and they laughed like children because their attempts were unsuccessful. At last, after exerting themselves breathing and blowing until they were both red in the face, the embers began to glow, and their minute stock of finely chopped sticks

was ingeniously laid to heat the stove and the room without wasting any. 'Do you notice, dear husband,' said the woman, 'that we have only sufficient left for one more day: what then?'

'Something will turn up,' answered Henry, looking at her as though he thought her remark quite unnecessary.

By this time it was quite light; they made an excellent breakfast of water broth spiced with kisses and chatter, and Henry made clear to his wife how false was the Latin proverb *Sine Baccho et Cerere friget Venus*. So the hours passed.

'I am already looking forward', said Henry, 'to that point in my diary, where I had suddenly to run away with you, my dearest.'

'Oh heavens!' she cried, 'how strangely and unexpectedly that wonderful moment came upon us! For several days I had noticed a certain ill-humour in my father; he did not speak to me in his usual tone. Your constant visits had already caused him some surprise; now he no longer mentioned you, but spoke of the middle classes who often forget their position, and want to force themselves into an equality with their betters. When I did not answer he was annoyed, and when at last I did speak, his mood changed to hot anger. I felt that he was seeking a quarrel with me, and later that he was watching me and having me watched by others. After a week of that, when I was going out to pay a call, my faithful maid ran after me down the stairs (the footman had gone ahead), and under the pretext of doing something to my dress, whispered to me that all was discovered; my cupboard had been

opened secretly and all your letters found; in a few hours I was to be sent to an aunt far away in a dreary part of the country. How quickly I made my decision. I got out of the carriage at a draper's shop in order to make some purchases, sent coachmen and footmen away with orders to fetch me in an hour.'

'And how astonished, how startled, how delighted I was,' cried her husband, 'when you suddenly came into my room. I had just come from my chief: he had said strange things to me in quite a different tone of voice than usual, half threatening, half warning, but still friendly. I had luckily several passports with me, so without making any arrangements we jumped into a hackney coach, then in the village into a carriage and thus crossed the frontier, were married and happy.'

'But,' she went on, 'the thousand and one difficulties on the way, in miserable inns, the lack of clothes and service, the many comforts to which we were used and which we had now to forgo—and the shock when we heard casually from a traveller that we were followed, that everything was known, that one should have so little consideration for us.'

'Yes, yes, dearest,' replied Henry, 'that was the worst day of our journey. Do you still remember how, in order to avoid causing suspicion, we had to laugh at that chattering stranger's description of the abductor, who must be, according to his idea, a miserable specimen of a diplomat, as he had made no clever preparations nor safe arrangements; how he continued to call your

dear one a silly devil, a simpleton, how you nearly broke out in anger and at a sign from me forced yourself to laugh again; yes, even superfluously to reproach us for being indiscreet, imprudent, and at last, when the chatterer, to whom we must really be grateful for his warning, had gone, you broke into bitter tears . . .’

‘Yes,’ she cried, ‘yes, Henry, that was as merry a day as it was gloomy. Our rings, what valuables we had on us, helped us further. But that we were unable to rescue your letters is an irreparable loss. And it makes me hot when I think that other eyes than mine have read those heavenly words, those glowing tones of love, and that those words which were such bliss to me are a cause of anger.’

‘And still worse,’ went on her husband, ‘that, in my foolishness and haste, I left behind me all the pages which in so many moods you sent to me, or pressed secretly into my hand. In every case, not only in love, it is always the written word which brings the secret to light or harms the case. And yet it is impossible to refrain from making those strokes with a pen which shall lay bare the soul. Oh, my dearest, there were often words in those letters, written by your dear hand, breathed on by your sweet breath, which moved my heart so powerfully that I felt it might break asunder like a flower which has bloomed too quickly.’

They embraced, and an almost solemn pause followed.

‘Dear one,’ said Henry then, ‘what a library we should have had, if added to my diary we had



rescued our letters from the Omar-like pursuit.' He took the diary and read, turning back the pages:

'Loyalty! that marvellous phenomenon that mankind so often admires in dogs, is generally far too little noticed in man. It is unbelievable, and yet one can see every day, what a strange even complicated idea many people have of so-called duty. If a servant manages to do the impossible, then he has only done his duty, and the upper classes elaborate these duties to such an extent that they bend them to their convenience or make selfish use of them. It cannot be denied that the unending stream of books which appears in our century is to a very great extent unnecessary, often even dangerous. But supposing that in these egoistic times with this materialistic generation the prohibitive circle were broken—what complications, what trouble might not result?

'The so-called educated classes have only one desire and that is to be free of all obligations; they call it independence, originality, freedom. They do not realize that as they approach their goal those duties increase in importance which the State, that great, unspeakably complicated, monstrous machinery of social organization, undertook, even though blindly, in their name. Every one abuses Tyranny yet every one aspires to be a Tyrant. The rich man repudiates his duty to the poor, the landlord his duty to his tenants, the prince his duty to his people, and all of them are angry when their subordinates fail in their duty.

'And therefore even the lower classes call this claim old-fashioned, not in keeping with the times, and would like with talk and sophistry to deny and destroy all those ties which alone make the government and the education of mankind possible.

'But loyalty, real loyalty—how different is that, how far above an acknowledged contract, the carrying out of an undertaking. And how beautiful this loyalty appears in old servants and their sacrifice when, as in old poetic days, in true devotion they live for their master alone.

'I can believe it a very happy state when the servant knows nothing better, wishes nothing nobler than his master. For him then there is no more doubt, no more worry, no more hesitation or question. His condition is that of day and night, summer and winter, the unchangeable rule of nature; he understands everything through his devotion to his master.

'And has his employer no duties to such a servant? He has such beyond the payment of wages to all his servants, but to such a servant he owes something greater and nobler, namely a true, a real affection which goes out to meet this unqualified devotion.

'And how then shall we make amends, make return (for of repayment there is no question), for all that our old Christine does for us? She is my wife's old nurse; she met us at our first halting-place, and forced us almost with violence to take her with us on our journey. We could confide in her, for she is reticence itself; she was at home at once in the role which she had to play

both on the journey and here. And how devoted she is to us both, but especially to Clara! She lives in a tiny, dark room downstairs and keeps herself by going out to help in the neighbourhood. We could not understand how she managed to keep our clothes in such good order, or buy so cheaply, until one day we discovered that she was denying herself everything but the very barest necessities. She works very hard just in order to be able to serve us and to live near us.

'And so I shall be obliged to banish my Caxton, and must accept the outrageous offer of that niggardly bookseller. The word "banish" always touched me specially, when I heard poor women use it about good or much loved clothes which they were obliged to sell or pawn when they were in need. It sounds almost as though they talked of their children. Banished! As Lear treated Cordelia, so I treat my Chaucer. But has not Clara long ago sold her one good frock, the one she wore when we eloped? During our journey! Yes, Christine is of greater value than the Chaucer, and she must get something of the proceeds. Only she won't take it.

'Caliban, lost in admiration of the drunken Stefano and still more of his palatable wine, knelt before the drunkard and with upraised hands implored, "I prithee, be my god!"

'We laugh at that, and many officials, many bedecorated and eminent people laugh with us, who yet plead with a wretched minister, a drunken prince, a perverse mistress just as importunately, "I prithee, be my god! I do not

know how to satisfy my need to worship something, to believe something; there is no god in whom I can believe, whom I can serve, to whom I can dedicate myself fully; be that god—you have a supply of good wine, which we hope will last out.”

‘We laugh at Caliban and his slavish feelings, because here, as in everything Shakespeare wrote, an eternal, a striking truth is wrapped up in comedy; because we feel at once that a thousand fantasies of ours are changed into Caliban, therefore we laugh at these significant words.

“‘I prithee, be my god!’ That is what old Christine in her quiet, honest heart said to Clara, without putting it into words; but not like Caliban and those other worldly people, in order to get wine and honours; rather to get Clara’s permission to deny herself, to go hungry and thirsty and to work for her till late into the night.

‘It is not necessary to tell a reader such as I am, that there is here some difference.’ . . .

Emotion had interrupted the reading, an emotion deepened by the entrance of the wrinkled, half ill, miserably dressed old nurse, who came to tell them that she would not be sleeping downstairs in her tiny chamber that night, but would be back early in the morning to do the scanty marketing. While Clara left the room with her and they had some conversation on the stairs, Henry beat his hands upon the table and cried with tears: ‘Why don’t I go out and work as a labourer? I am still healthy and strong. But no, I dare not; for that would

make my Clara wretched; she would also want to earn something, would worry herself and seek to help, and then we should both declare our wretchedness. We should be discovered at once. And if we but live, we are happy.'

Clara came back in good spirits, and together they enjoyed their wretched midday meal as though it were a banquet. 'If only our supply of wood were not at an end, we should need nothing,' said Clara, after they had finished, 'but even Christine can think of no means of replenishing that.'

'Dear wife,' said Henry, very earnestly, 'we are living in a civilized century, in a well governed land, not amongst heathen and cannibals, there must be ways and means. If we were on a desert island I should naturally, like Robinson Crusoe, cut down a few trees. Perhaps there is a wood where one least expects it; Birnam Wood came to Macbeth, though, it is true, only to harm him. However, islands sometimes appear suddenly out of the sea; amidst ravines and rocks a palm-tree sometimes grows; if lambs and sheep go too near a thorn-bush it tears out their wool, but the linnet carries off such bits of wool to its nest, to make a warm bed for its young.'

That night Clara slept longer than usual, and woke at last astonished to find that it was broad daylight, and that her husband was no longer by her side. But her astonishment increased when she heard a loud, shrieking noise like a saw being drawn across hard, refractory wood. She dressed quickly and went to find the cause of the

noise. 'My Henry,' she cried, 'what are you doing?'

'Sawing the wood for our fire,' he answered, panting, and ceasing work for a moment looked up at his wife with a very red face.

'Tell me first how on earth you managed to procure the saw, and that enormous block of beautiful wood?'

'You know,' said Henry, 'there are here four or five steps up to an empty attic. Now, by peering through the keyhole, I recently noticed in an alcove a saw and a hatchet, probably belonging to the old landlord or goodness knows whom. One notices the trend of affairs, and so I made a mental note of these implements. This morning, while you were sleeping so peacefully, I went up there in the pitch dark, broke open the door, which was fastened only by a miserable little bolt, and took these two murderous instruments. Then, knowing all the ins and outs of this house, not without trouble and exertion and with the help of this hatchet, I took this great, thick, heavy rail from its groove on our stairs and brought it into our little room, which it completely fills. Look, dear Clara, what solid, excellent people our ancestors were. Notice this oaken mass, of finest and choicest wood, so beautifully polished and varnished. That will make a very different fire from the wretched chips we have been burning up to the present.'

'But, Henry,' cried Clara, wringing her hands, 'you are spoiling the house.'

'Nobody comes to see us,' said Henry, 'we know our own staircase and never go up and

down, so that it is there only for Christine, and she would certainly be more than surprised if we said to her: "Look here, old lady, one of the finest oak trees in the whole forest shall be cut down, the carpenter and the cabinet-maker shall use their highest skill on it, just in order that when you come upstairs you may be able to support yourself upon this wonderful oak rail." She would laugh aloud, our Christine. No, such a stair-rail is one of the most unnecessary things in life; the forest has come to us, having noticed how great need we have of him. I am a magician: only a few strokes of this magic hatchet, and this marvellous piece of wood was in my power. That is a result of civilization; if one had here, as in many old houses, a piece of rope, or as in many palaces, an iron balustrade, then my idea would have had no value, and I should have been obliged to invent some other expedient.'

When Clara had got over her astonishment she had to laugh aloud; then she said: 'Well, as the thing is done, I will at least help you with the sawing, as I have often seen it done in the street.'

The log was laid on two chairs. one at each end of the room to suit its length. Then in order to clear the room, they set to work to saw it through the middle. It was difficult, for neither of them was used to such work, and the hard wood withstood the teeth of the saw. Laughing and sweating they made but slow progress. At last the log broke under the final strokes. They rested and wiped their damp foreheads. 'One advantage of this work is', said Clara,

'that for a while we do not need a fire.' They quite forgot to prepare breakfast, and worked away all the morning until they had cut the log into so many small pieces that it was quite easy to chop.

'What a studio our lovely room has become,' said Henry during a pause. 'That clumsy piece of wood, out there in the darkness, unnoticed by human eye, has been changed into these dainty cubes of wood, which with the aid of this hatchet will be prepared for the fire and give rise to flames of enthusiasm.' He took the first cube, and found that the labour of splitting it into pieces fit for the fire was even harder than sawing the whole piece. Clara rested and watched with amazement and pleasure while he tried and found the correct way to chop up the wood; even at so mean a task she thought her husband a fine-looking man.

It was lucky that while the walls resounded with this work the owner of the house, who usually lived downstairs, was away. So it happened that nobody in the house heard the noise. The neighbours took no notice, for there were many noisy trades in the suburb and particularly in that alley.

At last there was a little store of wood ready, and the fire could be lighted. On this memorable day breakfast and lunch were one meal, and it was a meal very different from those of the previous days.

'You must not be surprised, dear husband,' said Clara, before she laid a tiny cloth on the table; 'our Christine brought all sorts of things



back with her from her night's washing, and rejoices to be able to share them with us. I had not the courage to reject her gift, and you will accept it in an equally friendly spirit.'

Henry smiled and said: 'The old woman has long been our lady bountiful; she works by night in order to help us, now she denies herself food in order to feed us. Let us feast then to please her, and if she dies before we can show our gratitude materially, or if we are never able to thank her, at least we will acknowledge our debt to her by our love.'

The meal was indeed a feast. Christine had brought a few eggs, some vegetables and meat, and even a small pot of coffee. Clara explained to Henry while they ate what a real fête these people made of a night's washing, talking, laughing, and amusing themselves so that large numbers offered their services for the work. 'How lucky it is that so much which appears to us to be hard, slavish labour they can turn into an occasion for enjoyment. And have we not also experienced the fact that poverty has its own charm?'

'Yes,' agreed Henry, enjoying the attractive taste of meat which he had long been obliged to deny himself, 'if gourmands and those who continually over-eat themselves knew what a fine taste, what a delicate flavour the poor and the starving can get from a piece of dry bread, they would probably be envious and invent some means of sharing that pleasure. But how lucky it is that just to-day after our heavy morning's work such a meal is ready for us; it will

strengthen us for fresh efforts. But let us for once be really merry; sing me some of those sweet songs which have ever enchanted me.'

She gladly did as he asked, and sitting together hand in hand by the window they noticed how the ice-flowers on the glass began to melt away, whether because the cold outside was less, or because the warmth from the burning oak was greater and affected the frost. 'Look, my beloved,' cried Henry, 'how the cold window weeps with emotion, melting at the sound of your sweet voice. The marvellous tale of Orpheus repeating itself once again.'

It was a bright day, and they saw again the blue sky; certainly only a very small bit, but they rejoiced in their transparent window-panes, and in the thin, light, snow-white little clouds sailing across the azure sky and melting into nothingness or throwing wide ghostly arms as though to express a feeling of comfort and happiness.

In this busy street it was unusual to find an ancient hovel or tiny house. This one consisted of a room with two windows and the little attic with only one window. Downstairs lived the old, morose landlord who suffered from gout, but as he had means he was able to go away to another town every winter to undergo a cure under the care of a friendly doctor. The builder of the house must have been a strange, almost incomprehensible person: for below the window of the top story in which our friends lived there stretched a broad tiled roof, so that they could not possibly look down into the street.

Not only were they cut off in this manner from all that went on in the street below, even in summer when the window was wide open, but they were even more cut off by a smaller house which stood opposite. This had rooms only on the ground floor, so that neither windows nor living beings were to be seen, only, quite close, a smoke-blackened roof stretching far back, and right and left the bare walls of higher houses which bordered the low hovel on either side. In those early summer days when they had first come to live in this room, at any sound of shouting or quarrelling in the alley below they naturally rushed to the window and flung it open, only to find that they could see nothing but the roof beneath them and the other opposite. They laughed each time and Henry remarked that if (according to an old theory) an epigram consisted of disappointed expectation, then they had enjoyed another epigram.

It is not easy to live so completely cut off from one's fellow beings as these two succeeded in living on the tumultuous edge of a busy city. So cut off were they from all the world that it seemed a great occurrence when once a cat walked carefully over the roof opposite, and felt its way over the crest of the roof seeking an opening where it might find its friends. It was an important matter in the summer for the two lookers-on to watch the swallows flying in and out of their nests and bringing up their young in the holes in those two blank walls. It was a great event, almost terrifying in its importance, when a little boy, a chimney-sweep, appeared out of

one of the narrow, square chimneys opposite and made a few queer sounds which were supposed to be a song.

This loneliness pleased the young pair, for they could stand by the window embracing and kissing one another with no fear that passers-by might see them. Sometimes they imagined that the walls opposite were cliffs in a marvellous rocky part of Switzerland, then they watched with enthusiasm the effect of the setting sun whose red glow shimmered on the crags of stone or chalk. They could look back with longing on such evenings and remember all their talk, all their feelings, and the jokes they had made.

And now they had found a weapon against the hard frost in case it should last long or even become more severe. As Henry was not pressed for time, he made the task of chopping the wood easier by first cutting little wedges which he inserted into the block, thus splitting it more easily and quickly.

A few days later, his wife, watching him making the wedges, said, 'Henry, when this lot of wood which you have stored here is finished, what then?'

'My love,' he answered, 'the good Horace, if I am not mistaken, amongst other wise things, once said tersely, *'Carpe Diem!'* Make the most of the present, give yourself up to it entirely, seize it as something which will never return; and that you cannot do if you think for an instant of a possible to-morrow; if it by any chance happens that you think of it with care and sorrow, then the present, this hour which

you are now enjoying, is lost, because you are spoiling it with anxious thoughts. We are only conscious of the present, we can only live and be happy if we throw ourselves completely into it. Look how much is contained in those two words in the Latin language, that is well called terse and energetic, being able to express so much in so few syllables. And do you not know the song

Banish sorrow  
Till to-morrow?

'True' she answered, 'haven't we made that our philosophy during the last year? And it has been satisfactory.'

So the days passed, and the young people were so happy that they felt no want, though they lived like beggars. One morning the husband exclaimed: 'I had an amazing dream last night.'

'Tell me, dearest,' cried Clara: 'we pay too little attention to our dreams, which, after all are an important part of our lives. I am convinced that if more people wove the fabric of their nightly dream into their daily life, then their so-called real life would be less a matter of day-dreaming. Besides that, your dreams belong to me: they are the overflow of your heart and your imagination; I could be jealous when I think that some of your dreams separate you from me, that buried in such a dream you can forget me for hours, or that you might even in such a fantasy fall in love with somebody else. If that happened, would it not be unfaithfulness in mind and imagination?'

'It depends,' answered Henry, 'if, and to what extent, our dreams belong to us. Who can say to what extent they lay bare our innermost secrets. We are often cruel, liars, cowards in our dreams, yes, determinedly mean; we murder some innocent child quite happily, and are yet sure that such a deed is foreign and disagreeable to our nature. Dreams are of many different kinds. Though some verge on revelation, others come obviously from a disturbed digestion. For the wonderful and complicated mixture in our being of materialism and spirit, beast and angel, makes so many nuances possible in every function that it is impossible to generalize on the subject.'

'Oh, that generalization,' she cried, 'the maxims, the first principles and all the rest of it: I can never tell how repugnant everything of that kind is and always has been to me. Love makes much plain to us, even in our childhood. The generalizing philosopher can find a law for everything, he can fit everything into his so-called system, he has no doubts, and his inability to deal with real life is his safety, his inability to feel doubt is what makes him proud. A right thought must be an experience, a true idea must spring living from many thoughts and, coming suddenly into existence, throw out its beams to give light and life to thousands more ideas struggling into existence. But I am relating my dreams to you, and you should rather tell me yours, which will certainly be better and more poetic.'

'You disconcert me,' said Henry, reddening,

'for you are reckoning my dream talent far too high. However, judge for yourself.

'I was back again in the aristocratic district of the big town with my former chief. At dinner there was talk of an auction which was shortly to take place. Everytime the word "auction" was spoken I was overcome by unspeakable terror, though I had no idea why. In early youth it had been a passion of mine to attend book auctions, and though it was rarely possible for me to become the possessor of the books I loved, yet it was a pleasure to me to hear them announced, and to dream of possessing them. I read the auctioneers' catalogues as I read my favourite poets, and this folly and enthusiasm was only one of the many under which my youth suffered; for I was far from being what is called a steady, sensible youth, and in lonely hours I used to wonder if I should ever become a sensible and capable man.'

Clara laughed aloud, threw her arms round him and kissed him heartily. 'No,' she cried, 'thank Heaven, there is as yet no sign of such a thing. I intend to keep you so under control that you will never give way to such sins. Now, go on with your dream.'

'Not for nothing did I dread that auction,' went on Henry, 'for as so often happens in dreams, I found myself at once in the auction room, and saw to my horror that I was one of the articles for sale.'

Clara laughed again. 'Oh! that is lovely,' she cried. 'That is quite a new scheme for mixing with people.'

'I did not find it at all amusing,' replied her husband. 'All kinds of old rubbish and furniture were lying about, and amongst it sat old women, idlers, wretched authors, lampooners, depraved students and actors, all of whom were on that day to be knocked down to the highest bidder, and I was in the midst of this dusty collection of antiques. In the room were many of my acquaintances, some of them looking over the goods for sale, with the eyes of a connoisseur. I was unspeakably ashamed. At last the auctioneer came, and I was as terrified as though I were about to be hanged.

'The stolid man sat down, cleared his throat, and began his job by reaching out for me and putting me up first. He stood me up in front of him and said, "Here, gentlemen, I have a fairly well preserved Diplomat, rather shrivelled and torn, damaged in places by moth and worms, but still useful as a fire-screen, to protect you against too great heat, or to use as a caryatid, with perhaps a clock on his head. Or he can be hung at the window as a barometer. There is still a little sense left in him, so that he can talk on everyday matters, if they are not too deep. What will you offer?"

'No reply. The auctioneer cried: "Now, ladies and gentlemen. He could be used as a door-keeper at an embassy; he could hang in the hall as a chandelier, and carry lights on hands, feet, and head. He is a nice handy man. If anybody has an organ in their house he would be useful to blow it, his legs, as you can see, are tolerably well made." But still no reply. I felt crushed to



the earth, and my shame was unbounded: for many of my acquaintances looked with grins of mocking pity at me, some laughed, others shrugged their shoulders as though in deeply contemptuous sorrow. My servant now came into the hall, and I stepped forward to give him an order, but the auctioneer pushed me back with the words, "Quiet, old furniture! Don't you know your place? Here it is your duty to stay quiet. Just think what would happen if all the goods for sale got independent." There was still no bid in reply to another question. "The creature is not worth anything," came a murmur from one corner. "Who would bid anything for such a good-for-nothing?" asked another. The sweat stood on my forehead with fear. I signed to my servant with my eyes that he should bid something: for, I thought very sensibly, if he once bought me and I could get out of the accursed place, I should be able to come to terms with him outside, for he knew me well; I would repay his outlay and add a tip to it. Either he had no money on him, or did not understand my wink, perhaps he could not understand the whole business; anyhow, he did not make any move. The auctioneer was annoyed; he called his assistant and said, "Fetch numbers 2, 3, and 4 from the loft." The hefty man brought three ragged creatures, and the auctioneer called, "As nobody will bid for this Diplomat, we will put him in one lot with these three journalists: a former editor of a weekly paper, a leader-writer, and a dramatic critic—what will you offer for this little crowd together?"

‘An old hawker, after standing for a time with one hand pressed to his forehead, cried, “One penny”. The auctioneer said “One penny? Anybody bid more? One penny. Going—”; he raised his hammer. A dirty little Jewish boy cried, “Three ha’pence”. The auctioneer repeated the bid, once, twice, he was just about to bring his hammer down for the third time and hand me with my companions over to young Israel, when you, Clara, in full glory, with a train of aristocratic ladies, came in and, standing proudly there, cried in a voice of command, “Stop!” Everybody was startled and surprised, and my heart began to beat joyfully. “My husband up for auction?” you asked indignantly: “how much has been offered?” The old auctioneer bowed low, offered you a chair, and, fiery red from embarrassment said, “So far only three ha’pence has been offered for the gentleman.”

‘You said, “I shall now bid for my husband alone, the other three people must be removed. Three ha’pence for that incomparable man! Unheard of! I will begin at one thousand thalers.” I was pleased but astonished, for I could not imagine where the money was to come from. But I was soon relieved of that anxiety, for another beautiful lady immediately bid two thousand. Then began a competition amongst these rich and aristocratic women for the possession of me. The bids came faster and faster, soon they had reached ten thousand and then twenty thousand. At every bid I pulled myself more together, stood there more proud and upright, and finally began to pace up and

down behind the table, and my auctioneer no longer ventured to bid me be still. I threw scornful glances at those acquaintances whom I had heard murmuring "Rascal" and "Good-for-nothing". Everybody looked with respect at me now, particularly as the enthusiastic competition between the ladies for the possession of me grew more intense. An elderly, ugly woman appeared determined not to lose me; her red nose glowed brighter and brighter, and it was she who sent the bids up to a hundred thousand thalers. Deadly stillness reigned, and an awed voice was heard, "No man has had so high a price put on him in this century. I see that he is too valuable for me". When I looked round to see who was speaking, I found that that judgement came from my ambassador. I bowed graciously to him. In short my value rose to two hundred thousand thalers and a few over, and at that price I was finally knocked down to the red-nosed, ugly old woman.

"When the business was over at last a great tumult arose, because everybody wanted a near view of the extraordinary purchase. I cannot say how it happened, but the enormous purchase price was handed over to me in defiance of all the rules of the auction.

"As I was about to be removed from the sale-room, you started forward and cried out: "Not yet! As my husband, in defiance of all Christian principles, has been openly put up for auction and sold, I will also suffer the same fate. I hereby put myself voluntarily under the auctioneer's hammer." The old man bowed and cringed,

you went behind his long table, and everybody gazed wonderingly at your beauty. The bidding began, and the young gentlemen soon forced the price up. At first I hung back, partly from astonishment, partly from curiosity. When the bids had reached the thousands, I joined in. We went higher and higher, and my chief got so excited that I nearly lost my composure; for it seemed wicked to me that this elderly man could thus try to rob me of my dear wife. He noticed my ill humour; for he looked sideways at me all the time and smiled wickedly. More and more wealthy cavaliers came, and but for the immense sum of money in my pocket I should have lost you. It tickled me immensely to feel that I could show my love for you more lavishly than you yours for me, for after your one bid of a thousand thalers you were silent and left me to the luck of the auction and that red-nosed lady, who now seemingly had disappeared, for I could not see her anywhere. We were now well over the hundred thousand, you nodded more and more lovingly to me over the table: and as I was in possession of so much capital I was able to raise my bids until all my fellow bidders were in despair. With scornful laughter and arrogance I went on bidding until at last all were silent, and you were knocked down to me. I triumphed. I counted out the money, but—alas, in the frenzy I had not counted the money paid to me, and now I found that I was several thousand thalers short. Everybody mocked at me in my despair. You wrung your hands. We were carried off to a dark prison-cell and loaded with

chains. Our food was only bread and water, and I was obliged to laugh at the idea that that could be a punishment for us, for we had long had even less up here, and could look on bread and water as a feast. So everything got mixed up in my dream, present and past, near and far. The jailer told us that the judge had sentenced us to death, because we had cunningly defrauded the royal Treasury and the public revenues, behaved deceitfully to the people, and undermined the credit of the State. It was a terrible crime to allow oneself to be auctioned for so high a price, and to allow so much money to be paid, money which must be withdrawn from commerce and general usefulness. We had run counter to that patriotism which each individual must offer to the country and therefore our outrage must be looked upon as high treason. The old auctioneer would be executed with us, for he was also in the plot, and helped to drive the bids up so high by acclaiming us quite untruthfully to the bidders as marvels of creation. All was now discovered, and we were guilty of trying in conjunction with foreign powers and the enemies of our country to cause national bankruptcy. For it was obvious that if such enormous sums were expended on individuals who were not even workers, there would be nothing left for the government, schools and universities, or even prisons and workhouses. Directly we had left, ten nobles and fifteen respected ladies had put themselves up for auction, and the money was again taken from the Treasury and the revenue. All moral values were ruined by such wicked,

pernicious examples, and the value of virtue would disappear if so enormously high a price were put on individuals. That all seemed quite sensible to me and I regretted that I was the cause of this muddle.

'As we were being taken out to execution I awoke and found myself in your arms.'

'The story certainly needs consideration,' said Clara, 'it is, in rather a glaring light, the story of the many people who sell themselves to the highest bidder. This marvellous auction certainly cuts through the arrangements of every state.'

'I also think this silly dream needs consideration,' replied Henry; 'for the world has forsaken me, and I have forsaken the world, so that nobody would be willing to state my worth definitely. My credit in the whole town is not worth a ha'penny. I am quite certainly what the world calls a scoundrel. And yet you love me, you precious, wonderful woman! And when I consider how coarse and clumsy the most costly and delicate weaving-machine is when compared with the elaborate circulatory system of our blood, our nerves, our brain; and that this skull, which so many people think is not worth its upkeep, can contain so many great and noble ideas, may even hit upon some new discovery, then I could laugh at the thought that millions will not outweigh this organization which the cleverest and proudest is not capable of calling into existence. When our heads come together, our foreheads touch, and our lips are pressed together in a kiss, it is almost beyond belief what

ingenious mechanism has been brought into play, what difficulties overcome, what union of limb and flesh, of skin and lymph, blood and moisture have been brought into action on both sides in order through the play of the nerves, the fine feeling and still more incomprehensible spirit, to enhance the pleasure of that kiss. On what strange, wonderful, and unpleasant things does one come when studying the anatomy of the human eye, discovering the godlike glance to be a mixture of bright mucus and milky fluid.'

'Oh, stop,' she cried, 'those are ungodly ideas.'

'Ungodly?' asked Henry in astonishment.

'Yes, I cannot call them anything else. It may be a doctor's duty, for the sake of his knowledge, to tear away the veil which is drawn over the inner life. But the investigator will be led only from the deception of beauty into other deceptions which he will probably call knowledge, perception, nature. But if sheer inquisitiveness, shameless curiosity, or sneering mockery breaks through this network and those dreams under which beauty and charm lie hidden then that is, I think, an ungodly business.'

Henry was quiet and thoughtful. 'You may be right,' he said after a pause. 'Everything which makes our life beautiful is built up on forbearance, a lovely twilight in which floats, in quiet satisfaction, all that is noble, and which must not be glaringly illuminated. Death and decay, annihilation and disappearance are not truer than the spiritual riddle of our life. Crush the bloom of a sweet-scented flower, and the slime left in your hand is neither flower nor

nature. We must not in our folly desire to wake out of this noble unconsciousness in which nature and existence cradle this poetical slumber in order to seek truth on the other side.'

'Do you not remember those beautiful lines?' she asked,

'And as a man can only say "Thus am I",  
Hoping his friends may love him as he is.'

'Very true,' cried Henry. 'Even the intimate friend, the lover, must show consideration for his dear friend, with consideration dream of the secret of life within him, and in mutual earnest love avoid destroying the spiritual illusion. There are, however, some coarse fellows who under the excuse of living only for Truth want friends in order to have somebody for whom they do not need to have any consideration. Not only do these fellows bore their so-called friends with poor jokes; but they even make their weaknesses, human failings, and contradictions subjects for their observation.'

So the days and weeks passed for the lonely, poor, but happy couple. Their meagre meals just sufficed them, and so great was their mutual love that even the most extreme poverty was not able to disturb their contentment. Henry always rose earlier than Clara now, and she heard him hammering and sawing, and found the wood for the fire ready in front of the stove. She noticed that lately this wood had been of quite a different shape, colour, and character than that to which she was accustomed. But as she always found



a supply ready, she made no remarks about it, the talk, jokes, and laughter at their so-called breakfast-table being of much more importance to her.

'The days are already lengthening,' he began; 'soon we shall see the spring sunshine on the roof opposite.'

'Yes,' she said, 'and the time is no longer far off when we shall be able to open the window and sit here breathing in the fresh air. It was too lovely last summer, when the smell of the lime-trees in the Park reached us here.'

She fetched two small pots filled with earth in which she grew flowers. 'Look,' she went on, 'this hyacinth and this tulip which we gave up as dead are going to grow. If they really grow, I shall look upon it as an oracle that our fate will soon take a turn for the better.'

'But dearest,' he said, rather hurt, 'what do we lack? Haven't we more than enough firing, bread, and water? The weather appears to be getting milder, we shall not have such a need for wood, and then will come the warm summer. Truly we have nothing left to sell, but an opportunity will come for me to earn something. Only think of the luck that neither of us has been ill, nor old Christine.'

'Who can answer for that most faithful of servants?' answered Clara; 'I have not seen her for a very long time; you deal with her always so early each morning while I am still asleep: you take the bread and the jug of water from her. I know she often works for other families, she is old, she gets very little food; if she gets weaker

she might easily be taken ill. Why does she never come up to see us now?"

'Oh, well,' said Henry, with some embarrassment, which Clara could not help noticing, 'there will probably soon be an opportunity for you to see her; wait awhile.'

'My dearest,' she cried briskly, 'you are trying to hide something from me; something has happened. You shall not stop me; I will go down at once and see if she is in her room, if she is ill, if she is annoyed with us.'

'It is so long since you went down those fatal stairs,' said Henry 'it is dark out there, you might fall.'

'No,' she cried, 'you cannot keep me back; I know the steps, I shall find my way in the dark.'

'As we have used up the banisters which seemed to me unnecessary,' said Henry, 'I fear that, as you will have nothing to hold on to, you may stumble and fall.'

'The steps,' she replied, 'I know quite well; they are easy, and I shall often go up and down.'

'Those steps,' he said with a certain solemnity, 'you will never tread again.'

'My good man!' she cried, standing before him to look into his eyes, 'there is something wrong in this house. You may say what you like, I shall go straight down to see Christine.'

She turned to open the door, but he got up hastily, put his arms round her and asked, 'Child, are you determined to break your neck?'

As matters could no longer be kept secret, he himself opened the door for her; they went out on to the landing, Henry still holding his wife

tight, and then she noticed that there was no longer a staircase leading down. She clapped her hands in amazement, bent over and looked down; then she turned round, re-entered the room, and having shut the door, sat down and looked searchingly at her husband. There was so comic an expression on the face at which she gazed that she broke into hearty laughter. Then she went to the stove, took up a piece of wood, looked at it carefully from every side, and said, 'Yes, now I understand why the wood has been so completely different lately. So now we have burnt the staircase!'

'Certainly,' said Henry in a quiet and composed voice, 'as you now know it, you will agree that it was a very sensible idea. I can't understand why I have kept it a secret from you. Even if one has lost all one's prejudices, some bit of false shame always remains, which is at bottom quite childish.

'For, firstly, you are the human being most deeply in my confidence; secondly, you are the only one, for my slight intercourse with Christine is not worth counting; thirdly, the hard winter was lasting on and there was no other wood; fourthly, it would have been ridiculous to save it when the best, hardest, driest, most useful wood lay there at our feet; fifthly, we do not need the stairs at all; and sixthly, it is already burnt with the exception of a few remnants. But you have no idea how difficult these old, bent, ractory steps were to saw and chop. They made me so warm that the room often seemed hot afterwards.'

'But Christine?' she asked.

'Oh, she is quite well,' he replied. 'Every morning I let down a cord and she ties her basket to it; I pull that up, and afterwards the water-jug, and so we manage our housekeeping well and contentedly. When our beautiful banisters were nearly finished up, and still the weather refused to get warm, I considered what to do next, and it struck me that we could easily spare half the staircase; for it was sheer luxury just for the sake of ease to have so many steps, as it was to have so strong a banister. If one took longer steps, as one must do in so many houses, then every other tread would be sufficient. With the help of Christine, whose philosophic spirit immediately saw the rightness of my assertion, I tore away the lowest step, then, Christine following, the third, the fifth, and so on. When we had finished our filigree-work it looked quite good. I sawed and chopped and you innocently put the wood into the fire as cleverly and economically as you had before used up the banisters. But our filigree-work was threatened by the unending cold of the winter. What was the staircase now, really, but a kind of coal-mine, which it would be much better to denude of its coal at once? I went down the shaft and called our sensible old Christine. Without question she agreed with me; she stood below unable to help, and with great exertion I broke the second step loose. Then retiring to the fourth step I thrust my hand down into the depths and wrung Christine's in an eternal farewell; for the former staircase would never bind us or lead us to one

another again. So I destroyed it completely, not without great exertion, always tearing the lowest step away and moving it up to the one immediately above it. Now you have admired the finished work, my child, and must realize that more than ever we must now be sufficient one to another. For how could a tea-party with its load of scandal find its way up to you? Ah, no, I satisfy you, you satisfy me; spring is coming, you will put your tulip and your hyacinth on the window-sill and we shall sit there.

In the garden of Semiramis  
I will sit at thy side,  
At our feet the roofs of Babylon  
Bathed in sunlight.

For, look, opposite us will be the roofs bathed in sunlight when, as we hope, the sun shines again in July. When your tulip and hyacinth flower we shall have here the famous hanging gardens of Babylon, but even more wonderful than they were; for nobody can reach to us without wings, or unless we let down a rope ladder and give them a helping hand.'

'We are really living a fairy-tale,' she replied, 'living in a way that can only be equalled in the Arabian Nights. But what of the future?—for the so-called future will one day come nearer to us.'

'Now look, my dearest dear,' said the man, 'once again you are the more prosaic of us. At Michaelmas our grumpy old landlord travelled to that distant town for his doctor friend to give him treatment for the relief of his gout. We were then so boundlessly rich that we not only paid the quarter's rent, but also paid in advance until

Easter, which he accepted with a grateful smirk. So we do not need to concern ourselves about him before Easter. The real cold of the winter is practically over, we shall not need much more wood, and if the worst comes to the worst, there are still the four steps leading up to the attic, and our future lies securely there in many an old door, in the floor-boards, the window-frame, and a quantity of old rubbish. So be comforted, my love, and let us enjoy our luck right merrily, that we are able to live here so completely cut off from the world, dependent on nobody, needing nobody. So exactly the situation wise men have always desired, but only few have been lucky enough to find it.'

But matters did not turn out as he said they would. That same day, when they were just finishing their meagre meal, a carriage drove up to the tiny house. They heard the rumble of wheels, then the carriage halted and people got out. The queer-shaped roof prevented the young couple from seeing who or what had arrived. They could tell that luggage was being unloaded, and the horrifying idea crept over them that it was the grumpy old landlord, who had conquered his attack of gout sooner than was expected.

It was quite obvious that the newcomer was settling in downstairs, so that there could be no doubt who it was. Boxes were unloaded and carried into the house, there was a clatter of tongues as the neighbours came out to greet the newcomer. There was no doubt that Henry would have to deal with him that very day. He

stood by the half-opened door and listened to what was going on below. Clara looked at him with questioning eyes: he only shook his head with a smile and remained silent. Downstairs all was silent; the old man had retired to his room.

Henry sat down beside Clara and said in a rather suppressed tone: 'It is certainly annoying that so few people are blessed with as much fantasy as the great Don Quixote. When his library had been built up and he was told that a magician had gone off not only with the room but also all its contents, he understood the whole affair without having any doubts on the matter. He was not so prosaic as to inquire what had happened to so abstract a thing as the room it filled. What is room? An absolute, a nothing, a form of perception. What is a staircase? Something limited by certain conditions, but not by any means an independent spirit; an arrangement, an occasion by which to reach from below to above, and how relative are even our ideas of below and above. The old man will never allow himself to be persuaded that he is wrong in his belief that where there is now a hole there used to be a staircase; he is certainly too empirical and rationalistic to understand that the true man and the deep intuition does not need the idea of such an ordinary gangway as that miserable, prosaic approximation of a common ladder. How shall I from my exalted standpoint make that plain to him on his lower one? He will support himself on the old experience of the banisters, and at the same time

pass comfortably, by one step after another, along the height of understanding, and he will never be able to follow our incommunicable view, that we have broken away from under us all these trivial steps of practical knowledge and experience, and made them into pure knowledge according to old Persian teaching through the purifying and warming sacrifice of flames.'

'Yes, yes,' smiled Clara, 'go on with your fantasies and wit; that is the true humour of anxiety. But, listen, there are movements below again.'

Henry went back to the door and opened it slightly. 'I must go and visit my dear tenants,' said some one below very distinctly. 'I hope the wife is still as pretty, and both of them as healthy and merry as ever.' 'Now,' whispered Henry, 'he will come up against a problem.'

A pause. The old man groped about in the dim light. 'What is the matter?' they heard him ask, 'how comes it that I am such a stranger in my own house? Neither here—nor there—what is wrong? Ulrich, Ulrich, come and help me.'

The old servant who was general factotum in the small household came out of the room. 'Help me up the stairs,' said the landlord, 'I seem to be bewitched and blinded, I can't find the fine, broad steps. What is the matter?'

'Now come along, Herr Emmerich,' growled the man, 'You are still a bit silly after your journey.'

'He has hit upon an hypothesis which he will not be able to hold,' remarked Henry above.

'Hang it all!' shrieked Ulrich, 'I have knocked



my head; I seem to have gone stupid; it seems as though the house could not bear us in it.'

'He wants to explain matters by the supernatural,' cried Henry. 'That shows how strong is the bias towards superstition in us.'

'I feel to the right, I feel to the left, I grasp above—I could almost believe the devil has fetched away the whole staircase.'

'Almost,' said Henry; 'a repetition of Don Quixote; but his inquiring nature will not be satisfied with that; it is also at bottom a false hypothesis, and the so-called devil is often just brought in because we don't understand something, or if we understand it, it makes us angry.'

One could hear below only murmurs, faint cursing; the sensible Ulrich had gone silently away to fetch a light. This he now held aloft in his strong hand, and lit up the empty place. Emmerich looked up wonderingly, stood for a while with wide-open mouth, motionless from shock and astonishment, and then shouted with all the force of his lungs. 'Hang it all! This is a pretty business! Herr Brand! You, up there!'

There was no help for it now; Henry went out, bent over the pit, and saw in the flickering candlelight the two daemonic figures in the twilight of the hall. 'Ah! our beloved Herr Emmerich,' he called down in friendly tones, 'Welcome! It speaks well for your health that you have returned sooner than you intended. I am delighted to see you looking so well.'

'Your servant,' replied Herr Emmerich. 'But that is not the question at the moment. Sir, where is my staircase?'

'Your staircase, honoured sir?' replied Henry, 'what has that to do with me? Did you give it into my keeping when you went away?'

'Don't be stupid,' shouted the old man, 'where is the staircase? my beautiful, great, solid staircase?'

'Was there a staircase here?' asked Henry. 'Why, my friend, I so rarely go out, never in fact, that I take no notice of anything but what takes place in my own room. I study and work, and do not worry about anything else.'

'We'll see about that, Herr Brand,' came the reply, 'at present I am speechless with anger, but we'll see about it. You are the only person living in the house. You will have to explain this affair to me in a court of law.'

'Don't be cross,' said Henry, 'if you want to hear the whole story, I can tell it you now; for now I certainly remember that there was a staircase here, and I will own up that I have used it up.'

'Used it up?' screamed the old man, stamping his foot; 'my staircase? You dare to pull my house to pieces?'

'Nothing of the kind,' said Henry. 'Passion is making you exaggerate; your room downstairs is undamaged, ours up here is untouched; only this poor ladder for upstarts, that charitable institution for weak legs, the last resort and *pans asinorum* for boring callers and wicked people, that means of communication for troublesome intruders, that, certainly, owing to my arrangement and effort, yes, even heavy exertion, has disappeared.'

'But that staircase, with its expensive, indestructible hand-rail, its oak banister, twenty-two wide, strong, oak steps, was an integral part of my house. Old as I am, I have never before heard of a tenant who used up the staircase as though it were shavings or spills.'

'I wish,' said Henry, 'that you would sit down and listen quietly to me. Up those twenty-two steps of yours came often a godless creature who talked me round into handing over to him a priceless manuscript which he wished to print, but he went bankrupt and disappeared. Another bookseller was untiring in his ascents of your oak stairs, always helping himself along by that strong rail to make the ascent easier; he came and went, went and came, until, shamelessly making use of my difficulties, he wrung from me my priceless first edition of Chaucer, giving me a ridiculously small price, a truly infamous price in return. Oh dear, sir, when one has had such bitter experiences, one can really not be fond of a staircase which makes it so amazingly easy for such creatures to get to the top floor.'

'Curse your sentiments,' screamed Emmerich.

'Please remain calm,' said Henry rather more loudly. 'You wanted to know how matters happened. I was cheated and imposed on: enormous as Europe is, not counting Asia and America, yet I received no remittance, it seemed as though all credit were exhausted, and all banks empty. The extremely cold, merciless winter made firing a necessity; but I had no money to get it in the ordinary way. So I decided on

raising a loan thus, which nobody can call a forced loan. At the same time, dear sir, I did not expect you back until the warm summer time.'

'Nonsense!' said the old man, 'do you think, wretch, that with the warmer weather my staircase will grow like asparagus?'

'I know too little of the growth of staircases, or of any tropical plant, to vouch for that,' answered Henry. 'In the meantime I had great need of the wood, and as neither I nor my wife ever went out, and nobody came to see us, this staircase seemed to me to belong to the empty luxuries of life, to the unnecessary inventions. If, as so many philosophers declare, it is noble to limit one's desires, to be self-sufficient, then this for me absolutely unnecessary addition to the house has saved me from perishing of cold. Have you never read how Diogenes threw away his wooden tankard when he saw a peasant drinking from his cupped hand?'

'You are talking foolish nonsense, my good man,' replied Emmerich; 'I have seen a man put his mouth under the pump and drink like that; at that rate your Monsieur Diogenes might have cut off his hand also. But Ulrich, go and fetch the police, things cannot remain like this.'

'Don't be in too great a hurry,' cried Henry, 'you must admit that your house has been much improved by the removal of the staircase.'

Emmerich, who was already on his way to the front door, turned back again. 'Improved?' he shrieked in fury, 'well, that is a new idea to me!'

'It is quite simple,' Henry answered, 'and everybody would agree. I think you have not insured your house against fire, have you? Well I had often bad dreams about fires, and several cases occurred in the neighbourhood; I had a definite foreboding, I might almost call it a warning, that the same fate would befall this house. Is there (I appeal to any one who understands buildings; anything more stupid than a wooden staircase? The police ought to forbid such dangerous building. Wherever fire breaks out, in every town where this abuse is allowed, it is always the wooden staircase which causes the greatest disaster. As I felt certain that within a short time fire would break out here or in the neighbourhood, I tore up this wretched, dangerous staircase with my own hands, by the sweat of my brow, so that the danger and the damage should be lessened as much as possible. And for that I had expected to receive your thanks.'

'Ho!' shouted Emmerich up to him, 'and if I had stayed longer away the kind gentleman for equally clever reasons would have used up the whole of my house. Used up! As though one dared to use up houses in that way! Only wait, fellow!—Are the police here?' he asked Ulrich, who returned at that moment.

'We will build a strong, stone staircase,' called Henry down to him, 'and your palace, dear sir, will gain equally with the town and the State.'

'An end to your idle talk,' answered Emmerich, and turned to the inspector of police who had entered with several of his men.

'Inspector,' he said, 'have you ever heard of such an outrage? To destroy my beautiful, great staircase, and during my absence to burn it like firewood in the stove.'

'That will be entered in the town records,' answered the inspector haughtily, 'and the fine fellow who steals staircases will enter prison or fortress. That is worse than burglary! And he must make good the damage also. Come along down, Mr. Criminal.'

'Never,' said Henry, 'the Englishman has every right to call his house a castle, and mine here is inaccessible and impregnable, for I have raised the drawbridge.'

'That can be remedied,' replied the inspector. 'Men, fetch a fire-escape; then climb up and bring down the criminal, bound with rope if he shows fight, so that he may be handed over to justice.'

By this time the ground floor of the house had filled with people from the neighbourhood; the noise had brought together men, women, and children, and in the alley stood a crowd curious to discover what was happening and what the result would be. Clara had sat down by the window feeling perplexed, but she had not lost her composure, for she saw how gay her husband's spirits were and how little the affair was worrying him. But she did not see how it could end. Henry now came into the room for a moment to comfort her and to fetch something. He said: 'Look, Clara, now we are as completely shut in as Götz in his Jaxthausen; the offensive trumpeter has already summoned me to surrender at

discretion, and I shall now reply, but modestly, not as my great prototype did.' Clara gave him a friendly smile and answered only a few words: 'Your fate and mine are one: but I think if my father saw me now he would forgive me.'

Henry went out and, seeing that they were really bringing a ladder, said solemnly: 'Sirs, think what you are doing; my preparations have been made for weeks, I shall not allow myself to be taken prisoner, but will defend myself to the last drop of blood. I have here two double-barrelled guns, both loaded, and here an old cannon, a dangerous piece of field artillery loaded with grape-shot, chopped lead, broken glass, and such ingredients. Powder, shot, lead, there is a store of everything necessary in the room; while I shoot, my brave wife will load—as a huntress she is expert at that; and now come on if you want to shed your blood.'

'Here is an arrant rogue,' said the inspector. 'I have not seen so determined a criminal for a long time. I wonder what he looks like; one can't see anything in this dark hole.'

Henry had laid two staves and an old boot on the floor to serve him as cannon and guns. The policeman waved back the men with the ladder; 'My advice to you is, Herr Emmerich,' he said then, 'starve the wretch into submission; he will have to give in.'

'Quite a mistake,' came Henry's merry voice from above, 'we have a store of dried fruit, plums, pears, and apples, to say nothing of ship's biscuit, to last us for months; winter is nearly over, and if we run short of wood there is always

the attic; there are old doors, unnecessary planks, there must even be wood from the roof-supports which can be torn down.'

'Listen to that shameless creature,' cried Emmerich, 'first he tears down the lower part of my house, and now he will go and destroy the roof.'

'It is beyond a joke,' said the inspector. Many of the curious neighbours were delighted with Henry's determination, they were so glad the miserly old landlord should have this annoyance. 'Shall we fetch the soldiers, who will also have loaded guns?'

'No, Inspector, for heaven's sake, no; then my house would be levelled to the ground, and I should have nothing even if we forced the rebel to submit.'

'You are right,' said Henry, 'and have you forgotten what every newspaper has told you for years? The first cannon-shot to be fired, no matter where, will send all Europe up in flames. Are you willing, my dear policeman, to take upon yourself the enormous responsibility of allowing this hovel in the meanest and darkest alley of this small suburb to be the explosion point of an enormous European revolution? How could you answer for such frivolity before God and your king? And yet here you see the loaded cannon which can bring about the transformation of the entire century.'

'He is a demagogue and rebel,' said the inspector, 'one can hear that from his talk. He belongs to forbidden societies, and is bold enough to reckon upon getting outside help. It is possible that many of his companions are here



in this crowd, and are only waiting for us to attack in order to use their murderous weapons upon us when our backs are turned.'

When the idlers heard that the police were afraid of them, the noise rose to a great height, and the confusion became greater. Henry called to his wife, 'Keep your spirits up, we are gaining time and shall be able to capitulate, even if no Siekingen comes to set us free.'

Now loud cries rose from the street, 'The King, the King!' Everybody rushed about, backwards and forwards, for a wonderful carriage was seen to be trying to force its way through the crowded alley. Footmen in livery stood up at the back, a splendid, expert coachman drove the horses, and out of the carriage stepped a handsomely dressed gentleman with orders and star.

'Does not a Herr Brand live here?' asked the distinguished stranger, 'and what is the meaning of this mob?'

'They are trying to start a new revolution in there, your Excellency,' said a small grocer, 'and the police have got wind of it; a regiment of guards is on its way as the rebels will not surrender.'

'It is a new sect, Excellency,' cried a fruit hawker, 'they want to get rid of all staircases as godless and unnecessary.'

'No, no,' cried a woman, 'he is a follower of Saint Simon, the rebel; all wood and all personal belongings shall be common possessions, and they have fetched the fire-escape, in order to take him prisoner.'

It was difficult for the stranger to get into the house, though everybody wanted to make room for him. Old Emmerich came forward to meet him and with great politeness explained to him how matters stood, and that they could not decide which was the best way to capture the criminal. The stranger went further into the dark hall and called out with a loud voice. 'Does Herr Brand really live here?'

'Certainly,' said Henry, 'who is the newcomer who is asking for me?'

'Bring the ladder,' said the stranger, 'that I may go up.'

'I will make that an impossibility,' cried Henry; 'no stranger has any business up here, and nobody shall molest me.'

'But if I bring back the Chaucer?' cried the stranger, 'the Caxton edition, with the flyleaf on which Herr Brand wrote?'

'Heavens!' cried Henry. 'I will make room for you, you good angel; stranger, you may come up. Clara' he called happily, but almost in tears, to his wife, 'our Sickingen has arrived.'

The stranger talked to the landlord and calmed him completely, the police were recompensed and dismissed, but the most difficult job was to get rid of the excited crowd. When that was at last accomplished, Ulrich set up the heavy ladder and the distinguished stranger mounted alone to his friend's abode.

With a smile the stranger looked round the tiny room, greeted Clara with great courtesy, and then threw himself into Henry's arms. The latter could utter but one word, 'Andreas'.

Clara realized that their rescuing angel was that friend of Henry's youth, the much-talked-of Vandelmecr.

They recovered from the joy, the surprise. Andreas was deeply moved by Henry's fate; then he had to laugh at the strange difficulty and the way out he had chosen; then he admired afresh Clara's beauty, and the two friends were untiring in their recollections of the scenes of their youth, and revelled in feeling and sentiment.

'But now let us talk sensibly,' said Andreas. 'The capital which you entrusted to me when I went away gave so good a return in India that you may now call yourself a rich man; you will be able to live in independence how and where you please. In the joy of seeing you again soon, I landed in London as I had some financial business to attend to there. I went again to my old bookseller to seek a gift which should satisfy your fondness for antiques. "Look," I said to myself, "somebody has had Chaucer bound in the same capricious style as I once thought out for you." I picked up the book and received a shock, for it was yours. Then I knew enough and too much about you; for only want could have induced you to sell it, unless it had been stolen from you. At once, and fortunately for both of us, I found some writing of yours on a flyleaf in which you called yourself unlucky and wretched, and signed yourself Brand, giving also your exact address. How could I ever have found you, after you had changed your name and withdrawn yourself so completely, without the help of this dear, true book? Now receive it again for

the second time, and keep it with honour, for this book is strangely enough the link which has brought us together again. I shortened my stay in London and hurried here—and heard from an ambassador who was sent here by his king, eight weeks ago, that you had eloped with his daughter.'

'My father here?' cried Clara, growing pale.

'Yes, dear lady,' went on Vandelmeer, 'but do not be frightened; he still does not know that you are in this town. The old man regrets and bewails his hardness, and is inconsolable that he has lost all track of his daughter. He forgave her long ago, and with emotion he told me that you had completely disappeared, that in spite of the most energetic search he could find no trace of you anywhere. It is easy to understand when one sees in what complete retirement you live, almost like an anchorite of the Thebaid or the famous Simeon Stylites; that no newspaper has forced its way in to tell you how near you your father-in-law lives, and that he is, I am glad to be able to add, ready to forgive you. He wishes, when you and his daughter have been found, that you should go and live on one of his estates, as he feels sure you will not want to return to your former career.'

All was joy. The young couple looked forward to living suitably and in comfort again as a child looks forward to its presents at Christmas. They gladly gave up the compulsory philosophy of poverty, whose consolation and bitterness they had drunk to the last drop.

Vandelmeer drove them in his carriage first

to his dwelling, where respectable clothes were found in which they could appear before their reconciled parent. It is hardly necessary to add that the faithful old Christine was not forgotten. In her own way she was as happy as they were.

Builders, carpenters, and cabinet-makers were soon at work in the alley. With a smiling face old Emmerich directed the reconstruction of his staircase, which, in spite of the exhortations of Henry, was a wooden one again. He had been so richly and generously compensated that the old miser often rubbed his hands with joy and would gladly have had another such adventurous spirit as a tenant in his house.

Three years later the bent old man, with many bows and scrapes and much exaggerated gallantry, received distinguished visitors who arrived in a splendid carriage, and himself led them up the new staircase to the small room which was now inhabited by a poor bookbinder. Clara's father was dying, and she and her husband had come from the distant estate to see him for the last time and receive his blessing. Arm in arm they stood by the tiny window and looked again on the red and brown roof opposite, and the walls on which the sunlight played as ever. This scene of their former misery and yet unspeakable happiness touched them deeply. The bookbinder was just busy binding for a lending library the second edition of that work of which the poverty-stricken Henry had been so shamelessly robbed. "This is a much-loved book," he said, looking up from his work, "and will run into several editions yet."

'Our friend Vandelmeer awaits us,' said Henry, and having given the workman a present returned with his wife to the waiting carriage. As they drove away both were lost in thought about the meaning of life, its needs, superfluities, and secret.

FROM THE LIFE OF A  
GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

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JOSEPH FREIHERR VON EICHENDORFF  
(1788-1857)

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## FROM THE LIFE OF A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

### CHAPTER I

THE wheel of my father's mill hummed and murmured merrily again, the snow dripped busily from the roof, the sparrows twittered and flew around; I sat on the doorstep and rubbed the sleep from my eyes; the warm sunshine made me feel thoroughly happy. And then my father came out of the house; since daybreak he had been making a great racket in the mill, and now, his nightcap on one side of his head, he said to me: 'You good-for-nothing! there you are, sunning yourself again, stretching and cracking your bones tired, and letting me do all the work alone. I can't keep you here any longer. Spring is at the door; go out into the world and earn your own bread.' 'So?' said I, 'if I am a good-for-nothing, well and good. I will go into the world and make my fortune.' And really that pleased me very much, for the idea of going on my travels had come to me a short time before when I heard the yellow-hammer, which in the autumn and winter had sung sadly at our window, 'Miller, hire me, miller hire me!' now in the lovely springtime sing once again proudly and merrily from the trees, 'Miller, do your own work!' So I went into the house and took my fiddle, which I played quite nicely, from the wall; my father gave me a few ha'pence to take



with me, and thus I sauntered through the village. Secretly I saw with great pleasure my old comrades and acquaintances going off right and left to work, digging and ploughing, like yesterday and the day before and every day, while I went off into the wide world. With pride and satisfaction I shouted farewells to the poor people, but none of them took much notice. I felt as though an unending holiday had begun. And when at last I got out into the open country, I took my beloved fiddle and played it and sang, walking along the highroad:

God sendeth forth into the world  
Him unto whom His Grace He yields;  
To him His glories are unfurled,  
The mountains, streams and woods and fields.

The sluggards who remain indoors  
Drain not the ruby draught of dawn;  
Escaping not from childhood's laws  
They live on, hungry, bowed, careworn.

Forth from the mountain springs the rill;  
The larks soar high in joyous flight.  
Shall not my voice join with their trill  
From lusty throat and heart's delight?

Then may God sovereign here remain;  
The stream, the lark, the fields, the wood  
And earth and heaven shall stay the same;  
My lot is cast in happy mood.

In the meantime, while I was taking everything in, a splendid travelling-coach passed close to me; it had probably been travelling behind me for some time without my noticing it, my heart being so full of melody, for it was moving

but slowly, and two very grand ladies thrust their heads out to listen to me. One was particularly beautiful and younger than the other, but really both of them pleased me. When I stopped singing the older one ordered a halt and said to me most graciously: 'Ha, merry youth, you know very pretty songs.' I answered quickly: 'If it please your ladyship, I know many prettier.' Whereupon she asked me, 'Where are you going then, so early in the morning?' I did not know myself, but I was ashamed to say so, and answered boldly, 'To Vienna'. Then the two spoke to one another in a strange language which I did not understand. The younger shook her head once or twice, the other laughed all the time, and finally called to me, 'Jump up behind, we are going to Vienna also.' Who so happy as I! I made a bow, and with one spring was up behind the coach; the coachman cracked his whip, and we flew along the shining road till the wind whistled through my hat.

Behind me disappeared villages, gardens, and church towers, before me appeared fresh villages, castles, hills; below me crops, bushes, meadows; above me countless larks in the clear blue air—I was too bashful to shout aloud, but my heart shouted with joy, and I danced and stamped about on the footboard so that I nearly lost my fiddle which I held clutched under my arm. But when the sun rose higher and higher, around the horizon heavy midday clouds arose, and the air and the wide plain became so empty and sultry and still above the lightly swaying cornfields, then I remembered my village and my father

and our mill, how pleasantly cool it was there and by the shady fish-pond, and how very far that all lay behind me now. It gave me a curious feeling, as though I must turn back; I fastened my fiddle between my coat and my vest, settled down full of thoughts on the footboard, and fell asleep.

When I opened my eyes the coach was standing beneath a high lime-tree, behind which a flight of broad steps led up between pillars to a lovely castle. Away through the trees I saw the towers of Vienna. The ladies, it appeared, had long descended from the coach, the horses been unspanned. I was very alarmed to find myself there all alone and rushed hastily into the castle; as I did so I heard laughter from a window above.

Strange things happened to me in this castle. First, as I looked round in the wide, cool entrance-hall, somebody tapped me on the shoulder with a stick. I turned quickly, there stood a big man in gala dress, a broad bandolier of gold and silk hung over his shoulder and down to his hips, a silver-headed staff in his hand and an extraordinarily long hooked archducal nose in his face; stout and magnificent as an inflated turkey-cock, he asked me what my business was. I was quite abashed, and from shock and astonishment unable to answer. Thereupon more servants came running from upstairs and downstairs; they said nothing, but looked me up and down. Then came a lady's-maid (as I heard afterwards) straight to me and said: I was a charming youth and the quality wished to know

if I would work here for them as gardener's boy. I clutched my vest; my few ha'pence were gone, God knows they must have jumped out of my pocket while I danced about on the coach. I had nothing but my fiddle, and for that the man with the staff had casually remarked he would not give me a sou. So in my distress of mind I said 'Ycs' to the lady's-maid; still looking sideways at the sinister figure which wandered ceaselessly up and down the hall like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, and came at that moment majestic and terrible from the background. Lastly the gardener came, muttered something into his beard about rascals and louts, and led me away into the garden, delivering a long sermon on the way: how I must now be sober and diligent, not go off vagabonding nor fill my time with idle occupations or unnecessary trash, then perhaps even I could in time do something worth while. There were still more very pretty, apposite, and useful lessons, but since then I have forgotten them nearly all. On the whole I don't really know how everything happened, I just continued to say 'Yes'—for I felt like a bird whose wings have been drenched. But I was, thank God, provided for.

Life was pleasant in the garden; each day I had a hot meal, and more money than I needed for wine, but alas, there was rather a lot of work to do. The temples, arbours, and beautiful green walks pleased me very much; if only I could have walked peacefully and disputed intelligently therein, like the ladies and gentlemen who came

there each day. As soon as the gardener had gone and I was alone, I took out my short tobacco-pipe, sat down and thought of the beautiful courtly way in which I would talk with the young and beautiful lady who had brought me to the castle, if I were a cavalier and might walk with her here. Or on sultry afternoons, when all was so still that only the hum of the bees was heard, I lay on my back and watched the clouds drifting over towards my village, and the grass and flowers moving back and forth, and thought of the lady, and then it often happened that the lovely lady actually passed in the distance through the garden carrying a guitar or a book, still and friendly like an angel, so that I was not sure whether I was asleep or awake.

One day as I passed one of the summer-houses on my way to work, I sang to myself. And I saw two beautiful, young, bright eyes sparkling between the half-opened shutters and the flowers which stood in the dark, cool summer-house. I was very startled, and without finishing my song I went on to my work.

One evening—it was a Saturday evening and I was standing, in the pleasurable anticipation of the coming Sunday, with my fiddle at the window of the garden house, thinking of those sparkling eyes—there came a lady's-maid strolling along through the twilight. 'Our lovely mistress sends you this, you are to drink her health. And a pleasant night.' And therewith she put down a bottle of wine on the window-sill and disappeared quick as a lizard between the hedges.

But I stood a long time looking at the wonderful bottle and did not know what had happened to me. And if before that I had fiddled merrily, now I really began to play and sing, and sang the song about the lovely lady right to the end, and all the songs which I knew, until all the nightingales awoke, and moon and stars had long stood high over the garden. Yes, that was a wonderful night!

No man's fate is sung over his cradle; a blind hen sometimes finds a grain of corn; he who laughs last, laughs longest; the unexpected often happens; man proposes, God disposes; so I meditated, as on the following day I sat again with my pipe in the garden, and it almost seemed to me as I looked attentively at myself, that I really was a complete rascal. By this time, quite contrary to my usual custom, I got up early each morning before the gardener and the other workers were moving. It was so wondrously beautiful in the garden then. The flowers, the fountain, the rose-bushes, and all the garden sparkled in the morning sun like gold and precious stones. And in the tall beech avenue it was as still, cool, and solemn as in a church, only the birds fluttered about and pecked at the sand. Just in front of the castle, right under the windows where the beautiful lady lived, was a flowering bush. Thither I went early each morning and hid under the branches in order to look up at her windows, for I had not courage to show myself. There I saw the very loveliest lady, still warm and half asleep, wrapped in a snow-white robe, appear at the window. First

she plaited her dark-brown hair, her gaily sparkling eyes roving over bushes and garden, then she cut and tied into a bunch the flowers which grew before her window, or took her guitar in her white hands and sang so exquisitely across the garden that my heart nearly turns over for melancholy even now when I remember one of her songs—and oh! that is all so long ago!

That lasted for nearly a week. But once as she was just standing at the window and everything around was still, a wretched fly flew up my nose and I began a terrifying series of sneezes which would not end. She leant far out of the window and saw me, poor wretch, behind the bushes. I was so ashamed that for many days I did not return.

At last I dared to go again, but this time the window remained shut; five, six mornings I sat under the bush, but she did not appear again. Time passed very slowly, so I took courage and went every morning openly and frankly along the front of the castle beneath each window. A little further on I always saw the other lady standing at her window. I had not seen her so plainly before. She was certainly beautifully rosy, and fat, and stately to look upon, like a tulip. I always made her a deep bow, and, I cannot deny, she returned my bow each time, and nodded and was extremely gracious. Only once I thought I saw the beautiful one standing at her window hidden behind the curtains and peering out.

But many days passed when I did not see her.

She came no more into the garden, she appeared no more at the window. The gardener scolded me for a lazy rascal. I was discontented, my own nose was in the way when I looked out into the world.

So I lay one Sunday afternoon in the garden looking at the blue clouds from my pipe, and was annoyed with myself that I had not chosen some other work so that at least I might look forward to another free day on the morrow. The other youths decked out in their best had gone off to a merry-making in the nearest suburb. There everybody in Sunday attire was wandering about from one amusement to another, from one barrel-organ to the next. But I sat, like a bittern, in the reeds of a lonely lake in the garden, and rocked myself to and fro in the boat that was fastened to the bank, while the evening bell pealed across from the city and the swans swam up and down beside me. And I was frightened to death.

In the meantime I heard from afar many voices, merry chatter and laughter, coming all the time nearer, then I caught sight of red and white shawls, hats and feathers shimmering through the green, and a merry crowd of young gentlemen and ladies from the castle approached me across the meadows, my two ladies in the midst of them. I stood up and wanted to get away, but the elder of my two lovely ladies saw me. 'Ah! that is the very man we want,' she called out to me, laughing, 'row us across to the other side of the lake.' The ladies climbed one after another carefully and timorously into the



boat, the gentlemen helped them and made themselves rather important by their courage on the water. When the ladies had all settled themselves on the side benches I pushed off from the shore. One of the young men who stood in the bows began unnoticeably to rock the boat. The ladies turned anxiously from side to side, some of them even shrieked. My lovely lady, who carried a lily in her hand, sat close to one side of the boat, smiling so quietly down into the water which she just touched with the lily, so that her reflection could be seen amongst the reflected clouds and trees, like an angel moving across the deep blue floor of heaven.

As I looked at her thus, it occurred to the merry, fat one of my two ladies that I should sing to them during the crossing. At once a very elegant young man with spectacles on his nose, who sat next to her, turned to her, kissed her hand gently, and said: 'I thank you for your ingenious suggestion! a folk-song, sung by the folk in open field and forest, is like an Alpine rose on the Alps themselves—collections of folk-songs are but herbariums—it is the inmost soul of the National Soul.' But I said that I knew no songs lovely enough to sing in such company. Whereupon the pert lady's-maid whom I had so far not noticed, but who was standing close beside me with a basket of mugs and bottles, said: 'He knows a really pretty song about a wonderful fair lady.' I was covered with confusion. 'Yes, yes, sing that boldly,' cried the lady at once. At that my lovely lady looked up from the water and gave me a look which went

through me, body and soul. I no longer hesitated, but took courage and sang gladly:

Wheresoe'er I walk and see  
The fields, the woods and glade,  
From mountain top down to the lea,  
A thousand greetings I send thee,  
O pure and lovely maid.

And in my garden I can find  
Full many a beauteous flower,  
These into garlands I bind  
With myriad thoughts entwined,  
Therein greetings for each hour.

I dare not tell her, 'These are thine',  
She is far too great and fine:  
They will wither and grow pale.  
Love alone can never fail,  
Locked in my heart, 'tis mine.

Though I seem a carefree thing  
As all day long I slave,  
My heart is nearly breaking;  
But I dig and sing, though aching,  
And soon I'll dig my grave.

We reached the shore, the company landed, I noticed that whilst I sang several of the young gentlemen with sly looks and whispers had made fun of me to the ladies. The gentleman with the spectacles shook my hand as he left and said something, I no longer remember what; the elder of my ladies gave me a very friendly glance. The lovely one had not raised her eyes while I sang, and now went away without a word. But there were already tears standing in my eyes as I sang, my heart nearly broke with

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shame and pain, and I realized everything for the first time—how beautiful she was and I so poor and scoffed at and lonely—and when they had all disappeared behind the bushes, I could bear it no longer, but threw myself down on the grass and wept bitterly.

## CHAPTER 2

CLOSE to the garden of the estate passed the highway; only a high wall separated them. A neat little toll-house with red tiled roof stood there, behind it a little flower-garden with a brightly coloured fence, easily reached from the shadiest and most hidden part of the garden of the estate by a hole in the wall. The official who lived and worked there had just died. One morning, very early, while I still lay fast asleep, the clerk from the castle came to me and ordered me to go at once to the steward. I dressed quickly and sauntered along behind the merry clerk who kept picking flowers by the way and sticking them into the front of his coat, or swinging his cane and fencing with it in the air, chattering all sorts of things to me, none of which I understood because eyes and ears were still full of sleep. When I went into the office, where there was no daylight yet, the steward looked at me from behind an immense ink-pot, piles of papers, and a fine-looking wig, like an owl looking out of its nest, and began: 'What is your name? Where do you come from? Can you write, read, and add?' When I answered that I could, he added: 'Well, your employers, in consideration

of your good behaviour and special merits, intend you to have the post of collector of tolls.' I thought hastily over my past behaviour and manners, and I had to agree that all things considered I found they were right. And so, before I could look round, I became toll-collector.

I took possession of my new dwelling at once, and in a very short time was settled in. I found a number of chattels that the deceased collector had left to his successor, amongst others a fine red dressing-gown with yellow spots, a pair of green slippers, a nightcap, and several pipes with long stems. Those were all things which I used to wish I possessed when I was at home and saw our priest going about looking so comfortable. The whole day (I had nothing else to do) I sat on the bench in front of my house in dressing-gown and nightcap, smoked tobacco in the longest pipes my predecessor had left, and watched the people walking and riding along the highway. I only wished that a few of the people from my village who had always said I should never succeed at anything would come along and see me. The dressing-gown was just the right colour for me, and altogether everything suited me very well. So I sat there and thought over many things, that the beginning is always difficult, that a more genteel life is really very comfortable, and I formed a secret resolve not to travel any more, but to save money like others, and thus in time to make a name for myself in the world. But though I was thinking of my resolutions, worries, and business, I did not for one moment forget the most beautiful lady.

The potatoes and other vegetables which I found in my little garden I pulled up and threw away, and planted only the choicest flowers, which caused the porter from the castle, him with the enormous archducal nose, who, since I had lived here, often came to see me and was now my intimate friend, to look sideways at me as at one whose sudden luck had turned his brain. But I did not let that worry me. For not far from me, in my employer's garden, I heard voices, among them one which I believed to be that of my beautiful lady, though owing to the thick bushes I could not see anybody. So I gathered each day a bunch of my finest flowers, climbed over the wall every night when it was dark, and laid it in the centre of a stone table which stood in one of the arbours; and every evening when I took the fresh bunch the old one was gone.

One evening the company had gone out hunting; the sun was just setting, making the whole countryside glitter and shine, the Danube wound away in gold and fire into the distance, from all the hills far away through the land the vintagers sang and called to one another. I sat with the porter on the bench in front of my house and enjoyed the warm air and the gradual darkening and disappearing of the merry day. Presently the horns of the returning hunters sounded in the distance, answering one another from the opposite hills. My heart danced with pleasure, and I jumped up fascinated and enraptured and cried: 'Ah! that is my *métier*! the noble sport of hunting!' But the porter knocked out his pipe

calmly and said: 'That's what you think. I have taken part in it; one hardly earns the cost of the shoes one wears through, and is never free of coughs and colds from always having wet feet.' I do not know why, but a foolish anger overcame me, and I trembled all over. Suddenly the creature with his tiresome cloak, his eternal feet, his snuff, and his huge nose was horrible to me. Quite beyond myself I seized him by the coat and said: 'Porter, get away to the house, or I shall give you a sound thrashing here and now.' At these words the porter went back to his old opinion, that I was mad. He gazed at me thoughtfully and with secret fear, freed himself without a word, and went, still looking covertly round at me, with long strides towards the castle, where he announced breathlessly that I had now become completely mad.

I had to laugh eventually, and I was heartily glad to be rid of my terribly clever companion, for it was just the time when I always laid my bunch of flowers in the arbour. I sprang as usual quickly over the wall, and was just going towards the stone table when I heard at a little distance the clatter of horses' hoofs. I was too late to run away, for my lovely lady herself, in a green habit, with nodding plumes in her hat, came riding slowly and, it seemed, deep in thought, down the avenue. My feelings were exactly the same as they used to be when I looked in the old books at home at pictures of the beautiful Magelone, and as she came between the ever-nearing music of the huntsmen's horns in the changing evening light under the great trees, I

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was rooted to the spot. She was very startled when she noticed me, and halted almost involuntarily. I was drunken with anxiety, palpitation, and great joy, and when I noticed that she was really wearing on her breast my bouquet of yesterday, I could no longer contain myself, but cried, quite confused: 'Most beautiful, most honoured lady, take these flowers from me also, and all the flowers in my garden, and all that I have. Ah, would that I could jump into the fire for you!' She had from the beginning looked so sternly and almost angrily at me that it cut me to the quick, but while I spoke she dropped her eyes. The sound of voices and horses' hoofs could be heard near by. She snatched the flowers from my hand and without a word disappeared at the end of the avenue.

Since that evening I have had neither peace nor rest. I felt as I always did at the beginning of spring, restless and happy, without knowing why, as though some great joy or some extraordinary happening were awaiting me. That odious book-keeping, especially, would not work out properly, and when the sunshine fell through the chestnut-trees by the window upon the figures and added up and down so quickly from 'brought forward' to 'total', I had very strange thoughts, so that I was often quite dazed and truly unable to add up to three. For the 8 appeared to me like my fat, tightly-laced lady with her broad cap, the naughty 7 was like a signpost for ever pointing backwards, or even a gallows. But the 9 gave me the greatest amusement, turning itself upside down into a 6 when I wasn't looking, while the

2, like a question-mark, looked sly, as though she wanted to ask me: 'What is going to happen to you in the end, poor nought? Without her, this slim 1, you will remain eternally nothing!'

I no longer took pleasure in sitting before my front door. For greater comfort I took out a footstool and put my feet up on it, I mended an old parasol of my predecessor's, and spanned it above me against the sun, like a Chinese pleasure-house. But it was no use. It seemed to me, as I sat there and smoked and meditated, that my legs grew slowly longer from boredom, and my nose grew longer as I sat for hours at a time doing nothing but looking down it. And sometimes before daybreak a post-chaise came by, and I went out into the cool air still half asleep, and a pretty little face, in which only the sparkling eyes were visible in the twilight, bent inquisitively out of the carriage and wished me a friendly good morning. And from the neighbouring villages the cocks crowed so fresh across the lightly waving fields of corn, and a few too early awakened larks rose towards the bars of morning light above, and the postilion took his horn and drove on, and blew and blew—then I stood for a long time looking after the coach, and I felt that I also must go at once—out into the wide world.

In the meantime I laid my bunch of flowers on the stone table in the dark arbour as soon as the sun had set. But there was the trouble: since that evening it was all over. Nobody troubled about them; when I went to look in the early



morning the flowers still lay there, and looked sadly at me with their withered, hanging heads, the dew-drops on them looking like their tears. This grieved me very much. I made no more bouquets. In my garden the weeds might grow as they liked, and the flowers stood there and grew until the petals were scattered in the wind. In my heart it was just as wild and disorderly and unquiet.

Just at this critical juncture it happened that one day, as I was lying by the window in my house gazing discontentedly into empty space, the lady's-maid from the castle came tripping across the road. When she saw me she came quickly to me and said, 'The master returned yesterday from his travels.' 'Did he?' I asked, astonished, for I had not troubled about anything for several weeks and did not even know that the master was away—'that must have been a great pleasure to the young lady, his daughter.' The lady's-maid looked me over from head to foot so curiously that I had to think whether I had said something stupid. 'You don't know anything about it,' she said at last, turning up her little nose. 'Now listen,' she added, 'this evening, in the master's honour, there is to be a dance and masquerade at the castle. My mistress will also wear fancy dress, she will be a flower-girl—do you understand?—a flower-girl. Now my lady has noticed that you have particularly lovely flowers in your garden'—That is strange, I thought to myself, for there are hardly any flowers to be seen now for weeds. But she went on, 'As my lady needs beautiful flowers for

her costume, quite fresh, just picked, she wants you to bring her some this evening, after dusk, and wait with them under the big pear-tree in the gardens, and she will come there and fetch them.'

I was quite overjoyed at this news, and in my delight ran out to the maid.

'Phew! that nasty dressing-gown!' she cried, seeing me out of doors in that attire. That angered me, but I did not want to be behind in gallantry, and made several polite capers in order to snatch a kiss. But, unfortunately, my feet got entangled in the dressing-gown which was much too long for me, and I fell headlong to the ground. By the time I had picked myself up, the lady's-maid was far away, and I heard her in the distance laughing until she had to hold her sides.

And now I had something to think about and rejoice over. She still thought of me and my flowers! I went into my garden and hastily pulled up all the weeds from the beds and threw them high over my head into the shimmering air, as though I were pulling up by the roots all the evil and melancholy in the world. The roses were like her mouth, the heavenly blue convolvulus like her eyes, the snow-white lily was just like her, with its sad, hanging head. I laid them all carefully in the basket together. It was a still and lovely evening without a cloud in the sky. One or two stars already showed in the firmament, the murmur of the Danube could be heard from far away across the fields, in the great trees in the castle garden beside me

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numberless birds sang merrily. Ah! how happy I was!

When at last night fell, I took my basket on my arm and made my way into the great garden. There was such a bright mixture in the basket, white, red, blue, and scented, that my heart sang when I looked at it.

Full of happy thoughts I went in the lovely moonlight along the quiet sand-strewn walks, over the little white bridge under which the sleeping swans rocked on the water, past the charming arbours and summer-houses. I soon found the big pear-tree, for it was the one under which, when I was the gardener's boy, I had slept on sultry afternoons.

Here it was dark and lonely. Only a tall aspen shook her silver leaves and murmured ceaselessly. At times I could hear the dance-music from the castle. And at intervals I heard human voices in the garden, often they came quite close to me, then suddenly all was still again.

My heart thumped. I felt strange and frightened, as though I meant to rob somebody. I stood for a long time motionless, leaning against the tree-trunk, and listened in every direction, but when nobody came I could not bear it any longer. I hung my basket on my arm and climbed up into the pear-tree in order to breathe a fresher air again.

Up there the dance-music came merrily to me over the tree-tops. I could overlook the whole garden, and see right into the brightly-lit rooms of the castle. The chandeliers turned slowly like wreaths of stars, countless gaily dressed

ladies and gentlemen swayed and waltzed and crossed in a gay and vague confusion, like figures in a shadow dance. Sometimes they came to the windows and looked out into the garden. In front of the castle the lawns, the bushes, and the trees seemed to be touched with gold from the many lights in the rooms, so that the flowers and the birds woke again. Further away, around me and behind me, the garden lay dark and still.

She is dancing there now, I thought to myself up in the tree, and has certainly long forgotten all about you and your flowers. Everybody is so happy, nobody is troubling about you.—And that is what happens to you all the time and everywhere. Everybody has his own little corner, his warm stove, his cup of coffee, his wife, his glass of wine in the evening, and is content; even the porter is happy in his own way. Nothing is right for you. It is as though you always get there just too late, as though your existence had not been reckoned on.

As I sat there philosophizing thus, I suddenly heard something rustling below me in the grass. Two low voices talked together quite near. Then the branches of the shrubbery were parted and the little face of the lady's-maid appeared through the leaves, glancing in every direction. The moonlight sparkled right into her sly eyes as she peered out. I held my breath and gazed fixedly down. I had not long to wait before the flower-girl, dressed just as the lady's-maid had described, came out from between the trees. My heart was almost bursting. But she was wearing

a mask, and it seemed to me that she looked around her in astonishment—and somehow she did not seem slim and dainty any more. At last she came quite close to the tree and removed her mask—and it was the other, the older lady!

How glad I was, when I recovered from the first shock, that I was high up in safety. Why in the world, thought I, does she come here just now? that will be a nice business when my lovely lady comes for her flowers! I could have cried with vexation over the whole affair.

But the flower-girl began to speak: 'It is so suffocatingly hot indoors. I had to come out and get cool in the fresh air.' As she spoke, she fanned herself unceasingly with her mask, and puffed vigorously. In the bright moonlight I could see plainly that the sinews in her neck were very swollen; she looked very angry and her face was brick-red. All this while the maid was searching about as though she had lost a needle.

'It is so necessary that I should have fresh flowers with my costume,' began the flower-girl again, 'I wonder where he can be.' The maid went on hunting and giggling to herself—'Did you say something, Rosette?' asked the flower-girl sharply—'I say what I have said all along,' replied the maid, with a very serious, candid expression on her face, 'that collector is and remains a rogue, he is certainly lying fast asleep behind a bush somewhere.'

I itched to jump down and defend my reputation—when suddenly there was a great noise of drums and music and shouting from the castle.

At that the flower-girl could contain herself no longer. 'They are drinking the master's health,' she said ill-humouredly. 'Come quickly, we shall be missed.' And putting on her mask again, she went angrily away with the maid towards the castle. Trees and shrubs seemed to be making long noses and pointing fingers of curiosity at her, the moonlight danced nimbly over her broad figure as over the keyboard of a piano, and so she made a hasty exit, as I have often seen singers do on the stage, to an accompaniment of drums and trumpets.

I no longer knew what was really happening to me up in my tree-top, and kept my eyes fixed on the castle; for there a circle of torches at the foot of the entrance steps threw a strange gleam over the glittering windows and far out into the garden. It was the servants who were serenading their young master. In the midst of them, in gala attire and looking like a minister of state, stood the porter in front of a music-stand and worked hard at a bassoon.

Just as I settled myself comfortably to listen to the serenade, the French windows leading to one of the upper balconies was flung open. A tall man, handsome and stately, in uniform and covered with many glittering decorations, came out on to the balcony, leading by the hand—my lovely young lady dressed all in white, looking like a lily by night, or the moon moving across a clear heaven.

I could not turn my gaze from the balcony, and garden, trees, and fields disappeared from my consciousness, as I watched her standing

there, tall and slim, wonderfully lighted up by the torches, talking gaily with the handsome officer, or nodding in a friendly manner to the musicians below. The people below were beside themselves with joy, and in the end I could no longer contain myself, but was obliged to shout with them at the top of my voice.

But when they shortly afterwards disappeared from the balcony, down below, one torch after the other went out, and the garden around me became dark and murmuring again, then I began to realize—it felt like a weight on my heart—that really it was only the old aunt who had ordered my flowers, that my fair one had not given me a thought, and was already long married, and that I myself was a great fool.

All of which caused me to fall into an abyss of meditation. Like a hedgehog I rolled myself together in the prickles of my own thoughts: the dance-music from the castle only sounded occasionally, the clouds rolled alone over the dark garden. And so I sat the whole night long up in my tree like an owl, amidst the ruins of my happiness.

The cool, morning air awoke me at last from my dreams. I was thoroughly astonished when I looked around me. Music and dance were long over, in the castle and around the castle, on the lawns and the stone steps and the pillars, everything looked cool and peaceful and solemn; only the fountain by the entrance splashed on unceasingly. Here and there in the branches around me the birds were beginning to wake, shaking out their bright feathers and stretching

their little wings they looked with curiosity at their strange neighbour. Gaily moving rays of morning light shone across the garden and fell upon me.

Then I raised myself in my tree, and looked for the first time for a long while far out across the land, saw ships sailing on the Danube between the vineyards, and the still empty highway stretching across the shining countryside like a bridge across the valleys to the distant mountains.

I do not know how it happened, but my old desire to travel suddenly came over me again, all the old melancholy and pleasure and expectation. At the same time it occurred to me that now my fair one was sleeping between flowers, under silken coverlets in the castle, and an angel sat beside her bed in the morning peace—'No,' I shouted, 'I must go away from here, ever further away, as far as the sky is blue!'

And I took my basket and threw it high up into the air, so that it was a joy to see how the bright flowers fell through the branches and lay about on the green lawn below. Then I climbed down quickly myself, and went through the quiet garden to my house. Often I stopped and stood where I used to stand and watch her or where I had lain and thought about her.

In and around my house everything was just as I had left it yesterday. The little garden was plundered and wild, in the room the big account-book lay open, my fiddle, which I had often forgotten, hung, covered with dust, on the wall. But a ray of sunshine from the window opposite



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fell directly on the strings. That touched a chord in my heart. Yes, I said, come to me, faithful instrument! Our kingdom is not in this world!

So I took my fiddle from the wall, left account-book, dressing-gown, slippers, pipe, and parasol lying there, and wandered, poor as I had arrived, out of the house and away along the shining highway.

I looked back often; I had strange feelings, sad and yet intensely happy, like a bird that has escaped from a cage. And when I had gone some distance, I took out my fiddle and sang.

God sendeth forth into the world  
Him unto whom His Grace He yields;  
To him His Glories are unfurled,  
The mountains, streams and woods and fields.

The castle, the garden, and the towers of Vienna had already sunk behind me in the morning sky; above me, high in the air, countless larks sang songs of triumph; so I made my way between green hills and through merry villages towards Italy.

### CHAPTER 3

BUT this was dreadful! I had never thought that I really did not know the way. And all around in the quiet morning there was nobody whom I could ask, and not far ahead of me the highway divided into many new highways which went far, far over the highest hills as though they led out of the world altogether, so that I felt quite giddy when I looked at them.

At last a peasant came along, on his way I think, as it was Sunday, to church. He wore an old-fashioned overcoat with large silver buttons, and carried a long cane with a massive silver knob which sparkled in the sun. I immediately asked him very courteously: 'Can you tell me which is the way to Italy?' He stood still, looked at me, meditated, his under-lip thrust forward, and looked at me again. I repeated: 'to Italy, where the pomegranates grow.' 'Ah, what have his pomegranates to do with me!' said the peasant, and walked sturdily on. I had given the man credit for more manners, for he looked very distinguished.

What was I to do? Go back to my own village? The people would point at me, and the children run after me, 'Ha! a thousand welcomes to the returned wanderer! what does the world look like? didn't you bring us back any gingerbread from the great world?' The porter with the arch-ducal nose, who knew a great deal about the history of the world, often used to say to me: 'Worthy Collector! Italy is a beautiful land, God provides everything; there a man can lie on his back in the sunshine, and the grapes fall into his mouth, and when he is bitten by the tarantula, he dances with amazing nimbleness even if he has never learnt to dance before.' No, to Italy, to Italy! I cried, full of joy, and without thinking of the various ways ran straight along the road in front of me.

When I had gone some distance along the road I saw on the right a very beautiful orchard, where the morning sun shone so gaily between

the stems and the branches that it looked as though golden carpets had been spread on the ground. As I could not see anybody, I climbed over the low hedge and lay down comfortably on the grass under an apple-tree, for all my limbs still ached from my night in the tree. It was possible to see far into the country, and as it was Sunday all the church bells rang out from far away across the fields, and gaily dressed peasants wended their way between hedges and across fields to church. I was really happy at heart; the birds sang in the trees above me, I thought about my mill and my lovely lady's garden, and how far away all that was now—until at last I fell asleep. And I dreamt that my lovely lady came walking or rather flying slowly towards me from that wonderful garden, to the sound of the bells, with long, white veils floating in the red light of early morning. Then it seemed that we were no longer in a strange place, but near my village where the mill stood deep in shade. But there everything was as quiet and empty as it was when the people were all at church and only the sound of the organ came through the trees, so that my heart ached with sadness. But my lovely lady was very kind and friendly, she took my hand and walked beside me and sang the sweet song she had always sung to her guitar in those early mornings by the window, and I saw her reflection in the calm lake, a thousand times more beautiful, but with strange, large eyes, which looked so fixedly at me that I was almost frightened. Suddenly the mill-wheel began to turn and to rumble,

first with detached, slow beats, then ever faster and more furiously; the fish-pond grew darker and its surface ruffled, my fair one became quite pale and her veil grew longer and longer and fluttered horribly in long ends, like wisps of fog, up into the sky; the rumbling noise grew louder and louder, it seemed at times as though the porter were there as well, playing his bassoon, until at last I awoke with my heart beating furiously.

A wind had arisen and was blowing through the apple-trees above my head; but it was neither the mill nor the porter causing the rumbling, but that same peasant who had already refused to show me the way to Italy. He no longer wore his Sunday clothes, but stood before me in a white shirt. 'Ha', he said, while I wiped the sleep out of my eyes, 'Does he want to pick pomegranates here, trampling down my grass instead of going to church. The lazy rascal!' I was only annoyed that the boor had wakened me. I sprang up, quite angry, and retorted, 'What! he dares to abuse me? I was a gardener before he thought of such a thing, and a toll-collector, and if he had ever come to town he would have had to take off his greasy cap to me and would have seen my house and my red dressing-gown with yellow spots.' But the lout took no notice of that, only put both hands on his hips and said: 'What does he want? ha, ha!' I had noted by this time that he was a short, sturdy, bow-legged fellow, with protruding glassy eyes and a red and rather crooked nose. And when he kept on saying 'ha! ha!'—and each time

came a step nearer, a curious sort of hostile fear came over me, so that I jumped up quickly, sprang over the hedge without looking back, and ran straight on across country, with my fiddle jingling in my pocket.

When at last I stopped to get breath, the garden and the whole valley had disappeared and I was standing in a beautiful wood. But I did not take much notice of it, for now I was really angry as I thought of the scene and the way the man had spoken to me all the time in the third person, and I abused him soundly to myself for a long time. Deep in such thoughts I walked rapidly along, getting further and further from the highway, right into the mountains. The track along which I was walking came to an end, and there was only a narrow, little-used footpath in front of me. All around me there was no sign of life and I could hear no human sound. Otherwise it was very pleasant, the tree-tops rustled gently and the birds sang beautifully. I commended myself to God's guidance, took out my violin and played through all my favourite airs, which echoed merrily in the lonely forest.

The fiddle-playing did not last long for every instant I tripped over the roots of the trees, and presently I began to get hungry, and the forest was endless. So I wandered about all day, till as the sun began to shine slantwise through the tree-trunks I came out into a little valley quite surrounded by hills and full of red and yellow flowers, over which countless butterflies fluttered in the evening air. Here it was as lonely

as if the world was a hundred miles away. Only the grasshoppers chirped and a shepherd lay in the tall grass across the valley and blew such melancholy airs upon his flute that my heart nearly broke with sadness. Yes, I thought to myself, nobody has so good a time as a lazy rascal like that! I must wander about amongst strangers and be ever on my guard. A lovely little clear river flowed between us, so I could not get over to him, but I called to him from afar: Where was the nearest village? He did not disturb himself, only raised his head from the grass, pointed with his flute to the other wood, and went on playing.

Meanwhile I marched steadily forward, for twilight was already falling. The birds, all of whom had made a great deal of noise as the last rays of the sun fell through the trees, were suddenly still, and I began to feel almost frightened in the eternal, lonely rustle of the woods. I walked faster, the forest became thinner and thinner, and soon I saw through the last trees a lovely green space on which many children were shouting and dancing round a great lime-tree which stood right in the centre. Further, there was an inn in front of which sat some peasants playing cards and smoking. On the other side of the door sat young men and maidens with their arms rolled in their aprons, talking together in the cool of the evening.

I did not stop long to consider, but took my fiddle from my pocket and began to play a merry folk-tune as I came out of the wood. The

maidens were astonished, the old men laughed so that the woods rang. But when I reached the lime-tree and leaned with my back against it, playing all the time, there was a flustering and whispering amongst the young people; the young men laid aside their Sunday pipes, each took his maiden, and before I realized it, all the young people were dancing merrily round me, the dogs barked, skirts flew, and the children stood round and gazed with curiosity at my face and my fingers which twinkled so nimbly.

When the first waltz was over I could see what an effect good music has on the limbs. The young peasants who had sat, pipe in mouth, on the benches, stretching their stiff legs, were suddenly changed; they let their brilliant handkerchiefs hang down from their buttonholes, and pirouetted so gallantly around the maidens that it was a pleasure to watch them. One of them, who thought himself of some importance, fingered his pocket for a long time so that the others should notice him, and finally drew out a tiny silver coin which he tried to press into my hand. That annoyed me, though I had at the time no money in my pockets. I told him to keep his pennies, I was only playing because I was so glad to be amongst people again.

Soon afterwards a trim maiden brought me a great glass of wine. 'Fiddlers like drinking,' she said with a friendly smile which showed her pearly teeth shimmering charmingly through red lips I should like to have kissed. She put her little mouth to the glass, her eyes twinkling at me over the rim, and then handed me the

tumbler. I drained the glass and then began to play again while everybody danced merrily around me.

Meanwhile, the elders had finished their game, the young ones began to tire and little by little it became still and deserted on the green. Even the maiden who had handed me the wine had gone towards the village, but she went very slowly, and kept looking round as though she had forgotten something. At last she stood still and looked for something on the ground, but I noticed that when she bent down she looked at me under her arm. I had learnt manners at the castle, so I ran quickly to her and said: 'Have you lost something, loveliest Mamsell?'—'Ah, no', she replied, blushing deeper and deeper, 'it was only a rose, will you have it?' I thanked her and put the rose in my buttonhole. She gave me a friendly look and said, 'You play beautifully'—'Yes', I replied, 'it is a gift of God.' 'There are very few musicians in this neighbourhood,' began the maiden again, then stopped with her eyes on the ground. 'You could earn quite a lot of money here—my father plays a violin, and likes to hear about other places—and my father is very rich.' Then she laughed and added: 'If only you did not make such grimaces when you play!'—'My dear young woman,' I answered, 'this head-wagging, just can't be helped, we virtuosi all do it.' 'Oh,' replied the maiden—she wanted to say more, but at that moment a fearful commotion arose in the inn, the door opened with great creakings, and a thin fellow came flying out like a dis-



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charged ramrod, after which the door was slammed heavily again.

At the first sound the maiden was away like a deer and disappeared in the darkness. The figure by the door raised itself nimbly from the ground and began to rage against the house in the most astonishing way. 'What! I am drunk? I don't pay up the chalk-marks against me on your accursed door? Rub them out! rub them out! Didn't I only yesterday shave you over a cooking-spoon and cut your nose so that you bit the rotten spoon in two? Shaving one shilling—spoon another—plaster on the nose still another—how many more of such scoundrelly shillings do you want me to pay? But never mind, I will leave the whole village, the whole world unshaven. As far as I am concerned your beards can grow, until on the Judgement Day God Almighty himself does not know whether you are Jews or Christians. Yes, hang yourselves by your own beards, you filthy louts!' At this point he suddenly began to weep miserably, and went on pitiaibly in his reedy voice: 'So I'm to drink water like a wretched fish? is that loving your neighbour? Am I not a man, an experienced army surgeon? Ah, I am so excited to-day! My heart is full of pity and love for mankind!' All this time he was going further and further away, as there was no sign of life in the house. When he saw me he came towards me with open arms; I thought the mad fellow meant to embrace me, so I jumped aside and he staggered on. For a long time I heard him, now coarsely, now elegantly, talking to himself.

Many thoughts chased one another through my head. The young woman who had given me the rose was young, beautiful, and rich—I could make my fortune there before one could turn round. And sheep and pigs and turkeys and fat geese stuffed with apples—yes, it seemed as though I saw the porter coming towards me: ‘Take it while you have the chance, Collector, take it! nobody ever regretted marrying young; he who is lucky leads the bride home; stay at home and grow fat!’ Filled with such philosophical thoughts I sat down on a stone on the green, which was now quite deserted, for, having no money in my pockets, I did not dare knock at the door of the inn. The moonshine was wonderful, from the hills came the sound of trees rustling in the quiet night, now and then a dog barked in the village which lay hidden in trees and moonlight. I gazed in contemplation at the sky, watching a few clouds passing slowly across it, or an occasional star falling in the distance. Like this, I thought, the moon is shining on my father’s mill, and on the white ducal castle. Everything has long been quiet there, the lovely lady sleeps and the fountains and trees rustle in the garden just as they used to do, and it is absolutely of no importance to them all whether I am there or far away or even dead. And suddenly the world seemed to me so horribly large a place, and I so alone in it, that I could have wept from the bottom of my heart.

While I was sitting there thinking such thoughts, I suddenly heard horses’ hoofs from a distance in the wood. I held my breath and

listened; the sound came nearer and nearer, till I could hear the horses snorting. And soon two riders really came from amongst the trees, halted at the edge of the wood, and began to whisper together very animatedly, as I could see from the shadows on the grass, long, dark arms pointing first here, then there.—How often, when at home my long-dead mother had told me stories of wild forests and martial robbers, had I secretly wished to experience just such a story. Now I was being paid out for my silly, wanton desires!—I stretched myself as cautiously as possible against the lime-tree under which I was sitting, till I made myself tall enough to reach the lowest bough, and then swung myself up quickly. But I was still dangling across the bough, trying to draw up one leg, when one of the riders came quickly across the green behind me. I closed my eyes tightly under my covering of dark leaves and did not stir. ‘Who is there?’ called a voice suddenly, close behind me. ‘Nobody,’ I yelled at the top of my voice, terrified because he had seen me after all. I had to laugh to myself when I thought how disappointed the fellows would be when they turned out my empty pockets. ‘Oh! oh!’, said the robber, ‘then to whom do those two legs hanging down there belong?’ There was nothing else for it. ‘They are only a pair of poor musician’s legs,’ I replied, and let myself quickly to the ground, for I was ashamed to hang any longer like a broken fork across the bough.

The horse shied as I slid so rapidly down from the tree. The rider patted its neck and said

laughing, 'Well, we have also got lost, so we shall be good comrades; I thought you would perhaps help us to find the way to B. You will not lose by it'. It was useless for me to say I did not know where B. was, that I would rather inquire at the inn, or take them down to the village; the fellow would not listen to reason. He calmly took out of his belt a pistol which glittered beautifully in the moonlight. 'My dear friend,' he said in a very cordial tone, cleaning the pistol and testing the sights, 'my dear friend, you will be good enough to lead the way to B. yourself.'

I was in a fix. If I found the way I should find myself in the midst of the robber band and should certainly be beaten for having no money; if I did not find it—then also I should certainly be beaten. I did not stop for long thinking over it, but took the first possible road, the one which came from the village and passed the inn. The rider went quickly to his companion, and they both followed me slowly at some little distance. So we proceeded at random foolishly through the moonlight night. The way led through trees along the side of a hill. At times one could see far down into the deep quiet valley through the tops of the fir-trees which stretched up to us, dark, moving shapes; now and again the nightingales burst into song, and dogs in distant villages barked. A river flowed through the valley below, sparkling at intervals in the moonlight. And there were the monotonous hoof-falls and the confused noises of the riders behind me, talking to one another all the time in a strange

tongue, and the bright moonlight and the long shadows of the trees passing continuously over the figures of the two riders, so that they appeared first dark, then light, sometimes small, sometimes gigantic. My thoughts got thoroughly confused, as though I lay dreaming and was quite unable to wake myself. I marched straight ahead. We must, I thought, eventually get out of the wood and out of the night.

At last streamers of rosy light began to appear in the sky; very faint at first as though one were breathing on a mirror; then a lark began to sing high over the quiet valley. At that morning greeting my heart lightened, and I lost my fear. But both horsemen stretched themselves and looked around them and seemed to realize for the first time that perhaps we were not on the right road. They talked a lot and I noticed that they were speaking of me, yes, it even seemed as though one of them was afraid of me, as though I might be really a highwayman leading them astray in the woods. That amused me, for the lighter it grew around me the higher my courage rose, particularly as we came out just then on to a beautiful clearing in the wood. I looked all round me wildly and then gave a few sharp whistles through my fingers, as rascals do who want to signal to one another.

"Stop!" shouted one of the horsemen so loudly that I jumped. When I looked round they had both dismounted and tied their horses to a tree. One of them came close to me, stared into my face and suddenly began to laugh immoderately. I must own that I was annoyed by that silly

laughter. But he said, 'Yes, it is really the gardener, or rather I should say collector, from the castle!'

I stared at him, but could not remember having seen him before, but I should have had my work cut out to notice all the young gentlemen who rode backwards and forwards to the castle. Still laughing he went on, 'That's splendid! You are taking a holiday, I see; we need a servant, stay with us, and your life will be an endless holiday.' I was quite taken aback and said at last that I was at the moment on my way to Italy. 'To Italy?' replied the stranger, 'but that is just where we want to go also!' 'Well, in that case! . . .' I cried, and full of joy took my fiddle from my pocket and fiddled so that the birds awoke in the woods. The gentleman, however, seized his companion and danced with him madly round and round on the grass.

Then suddenly they both stood still. 'By Heaven,' cried the first, 'I can see the church towers of B.! We shall soon be there.' He took out his watch and let it repeat, shook his head and let it repeat again. 'No!' he said, 'that won't do, we shall get there too early, and that might be serious.'

So they fetched from their saddle-bags cakes, meat, and wine, and spreading a lovely bright cloth on the green grass, stretched themselves beside it and began to feast in high spirits, sharing everything very generously with me also, which suited me very well, for I had not had a proper meal for several days. 'And so that you may know,' said one to me,—'you don't

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know us, do you?"—I shook my head. "Well, so that you know: I am the painter Leonard, and that is—also a painter—Guido."

I looked more carefully at the painters in the morning light. The one who called himself Leonard was tall, slim, brown, with merry fiery eyes. The other was much younger, smaller and more delicate, dressed in what the porter called the old German style, with white collar and bare throat over which fell the dark-brown curls which he had so often to shake out of his pretty face. When this one had had enough breakfast, he reached out for my fiddle, which was lying on the ground beside me, seated himself on a tree stump and began to thrum on it with his fingers. Then he sang, clear and sweet as a bird, so that it echoed in my heart:

Through the silent misty vale flies  
One bright ray, herald of sunrise.  
Wood and hill stir in awakening,  
All who are winged to flight are taking;  
The joyous man, freed from all woe,  
Tosses his cap high in the air:  
Surely song too can take to wing,  
Then with a joyful heart I sing.

And the rosy morning light played charmingly over his somewhat pale face and his dark amorous eyes. But I was so tired that words and music became more and more entangled as he sang, till at last I fell fast asleep.

As I began slowly to awaken, I heard as in a dream the two painters still talking near by and the birds singing above my head, and the rays of morning shone through my closed eyelids, so

that I saw a light like that of the sun shining through red silk curtains. 'Come è bello!' I heard some one close beside me shout. I opened my eyes and saw the young painter bending over me in the shining morning light, so that only his big, black eyes were visible between his hanging curls.

I jumped up quickly, for it was already broad daylight. Leonard appeared to be annoyed; there was an angry frown on his forehead as he urged our instant departure. The other painter shook his curls out of his face and trilled a tune quietly as he unhitched his horse, till Leonard suddenly laughed aloud, seized a bottle which was still standing on the grass and emptied it into the glasses. 'To a happy arrival!' he cried, and they clinked glasses so that a lovely sound arose. Thereupon Leonard threw the empty bottle high into the air so that it twinkled merrily in the morning light.

At last they mounted again and I marched vigorously by their side. Straight before us lay an immense plain, into which we now descended. I felt as cool and happy as though I were about to fly out of the mountains into that lovely country which lay flashing and rustling and shimmering before us.

#### CHAPTER 4

Now farewell mill and castle and porter! We went so fast that the wind whistled in my ears. Right and left villages, towns, and vineyards flew past, just a flicker before our eyes; behind



me sat the two painters in the coach, before me four horses with a magnificent postilion, but I sat above on the box and was bounced often yards high into the air. This is how it happened: when we arrived near B., a long, thin, morose man in a green pea-jacket came out to meet us, and led us into the village. Under the lime-tree, in front of the posting-house, stood a lovely carriage with four horses. On the way Leonard had remarked that I appeared to have grown out of my clothes, so he hastily took some out of his valise, and I had to put on a quite new, lovely tail coat and a waistcoat, which suited my face very well, but were unfortunately too wide and too long and hung about me in folds. And I also had a new hat which shone in the sun as though it had been smeared with fresh butter. Then the morose stranger took the bridles of the painters' horses, the painters themselves jumped into the carriage, I on to the box, and we dashed away, just as the post-master put his night-capped head out of the window. The postilion blew gaily on his horn and we set off merrily towards Italy.

I had really a wonderful life up there on the box, like a bird in the air without the bother of flying. I had nothing more to do than sit up there night and day, and sometimes to fetch food and drink from an inn, for the two painters never left the carriage, and by day closed the windows tight as though they were afraid of sunstroke. Only now and then Guido put his pretty head out of the window for a friendly discussion with me, and then laughed at Leonard who wanted to stop him and was annoyed each time at our long

conversation. Once or twice I nearly quarrelled with my master. The first time was when on a lovely starlight night I began to play my fiddle sitting up there on my box, and then later it was about sleeping. That was quite astonishing! I wanted to have a good look at Italy and opened my eyes wide every quarter of an hour. But hardly had I sat for a few moments gazing in front of me than the sixteen horses' hoofs made such a confusion of everything, here, there, backwards, forwards, like a net, that my eyes began to close, and at last such a horrible and irresistible sleep came upon me, that I was at my wit's end. It might be day or night, rain or sunshine, Tyrol or Italy, I nodded right, I nodded left, backward over the box, yes, sometimes I nodded with such vehemence towards the floor, that my hat fell off, and Guido in the carriage screamed aloud.

So I travelled, I know not how, through half Italy, which they call there Lombardy, till one lovely evening we halted before a country inn. The horses were ordered from the adjacent post-house for a few hours later, the painters therefore got out and ordered a private room in which they might rest and write a few letters. I was very pleased and went at once to the travellers' room, hoping at last to get something to eat and drink in peace and comfort. It was a wretched place. The maids went about with uncombed hair, their kerchiefs hanging untidily about their yellow necks. At a round table sat the farm servants in loose blue smocks, eating their supper and gazing sideways at me at intervals. They

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all wore short, thick pigtails and looked like young aristocrats. Here I am at last, I thought, here I am at last in that land from which the queer people came to see our priest, with their mouse-traps and barometers and pictures. What adventures a man has when once he leaves his own fireside!

As I sat there eating and meditating thus, a little mannikin who had been sitting in a dark corner over his glass of wine suddenly left his nook and made his way towards me like a spider. He was very short and hunchbacked, but had a very large, terrifying head with a long Roman eagle nose and sparse red whiskers, his powdered hair standing up all round his head as though a storm of wind had blown through it. He wore an old-fashioned, faded frock coat, plush breeches, and silk stockings which had turned quite yellow. He had once been to Germany and thought he spoke German marvellously. He sat down by me and began to ask me this and that, taking snuff all the time: Was I the servant? when did we expect to arrive? were we going to Rome? But I did not know that myself, nor could I understand his gibberish. 'Parlez-vous français?' I said anxiously at last. He shook his huge head, to my great relief, for I could not speak French either. But it was all no use. He had some design upon me, he questioned me again and again; the more we talked the less we understood each other, till at last we both became so angry that I thought the signor with the eagle beak was going to peck me, and the maids who had been listening to our Babylonian discourse broke

out into violent laughter. I, however, put down my knife and fork and went out of the house. I felt, in this strange land, as though with my German speech I had sunk a thousand fathoms deep beneath the sea, and all kinds of unknown creatures writhed and hissed there at me in my loneliness, and stared and snapped at me.

Outside it was a warm summer night, just right for wandering with a loved one through the moonlight countryside. From the distant vineyards came the song of a belated vintager, an occasional flash of lightning flickered, and the whole neighbourhood trembled and whispered in the moonlight. Once it seemed to me that a long thin figure slipped between the branches of the hazel-trees in front of the house and peered through the leaves, then all was still again. Guido came out on to the balcony of the inn. He did not notice me, but began to play very cleverly on a zither which he must have found in the house, and sang like a nightingale:

Sometimes joy silence doth impart,  
 Whilst o'er the earth and through the trees  
 Rustles a murmuring, dreamy breeze,  
 Which seems from mortal man apart:  
 Ah, some soft yearning for a former day  
 And slight tremors rise and fade away,  
 Like summer lightning, in the heart.

I do not know if he sang more than that, for I had stretched myself on a bench in front of the inn door and fallen asleep in the warm night air from sheer weariness.

It may have been a few hours later that I was awakened by a post-horn which had been blow-

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ing merrily through my dreams for some time before I realized quite what it was. I jumped up at last; daylight was creeping across the hills, and I shivered in the cool air of morning. Suddenly I remembered that we had meant to be far on our journey again by this hour. Aha! thought I, this morning the fun of rousing others is mine. How Guido with his sleepy, curly head will jump when he hears me outside! So I went into the little garden, close under the window of my masters' room, stretched myself properly in the morning sunshine, and sang happily:

The cock-crow ushers in the dawn,  
And then we know that it is morn.  
When in the sky the sun is seen,  
Sleep seems twice as good I ween.

The window was open, but everything remained quiet above me, only the breeze blew through the vine-tendrils which stretched right into the room. 'Now, what is the meaning of this?' I cried, full of amazement, and rushed into the house, through the silent passages to the room. But there I was cut to the heart. For when I flung open the door the room was empty: no coat, no hat, no boots. Only the zither on which Guido had played last evening hung on the wall, and on the table in the centre of the room lay a beautiful purse, full, with a label fastened to it. I carried it nearer to the window, and could hardly believe my eyes, for on it was written in large letters 'For the Collector'.

But what use was that to me if I could not find my dear, merry gentlemen again? I thrust the purse into my deepest pocket; it felt as though

into a deep well, so that it drew me over quite to one side. Then I rushed out, made a great noise and waked all the men and maids in the house. They could not understand what I wanted and thought I had gone mad. But they were very astonished when they found the empty nest upstairs. Nobody knew anything of my masters. Only one maid—from what I could make of her signs and gesticulations—had noticed that Guido, as he was singing on the balcony on the previous evening, screamed suddenly and rushed into the room to the other gentleman. She woke once in the night and heard the sound of horses' hoofs. Looking through her little window she had seen the hunchback who had talked so much with me disappearing on horseback across the fields, galloping so hard that he rose yards high out of his saddle, and the maid crossed herself because he looked like a ghost riding a three-legged horse. I did not know what to do next.

In the meantime our carriage had been waiting at the door, and the postilion blew his horn impatiently till he nearly burst, for he had to be at the next halting-place at a certain time, everything having been arranged to the minute beforehand. I ran once more round the house calling the painters, but there was no answer; the people of the house gathered together and stared at me, the postilion swore, the horses snorted, I, quite taken aback, sprang at last hastily into the carriage, the ostler slammed the door behind me, the postilion cracked his whip, and so they started off with me into the wide world.

## CHAPTER 5

WE now travelled over hill and dale, day and night without stopping. I had no time to think, for wherever we arrived, fresh horses were waiting, already harnessed; I could not talk to the people, and my gesticulations were of no use. Often when I was in the inn, just at the best part of my meal, the postilion blew his horn, and I had to throw down knife and fork and jump into the carriage again, and yet did not know why I must travel with such extraordinary speed nor where I was going.

Otherwise it was not a bad mode of living. I lay, as though on a sofa, first in one, then in the other corner of the carriage, and became acquainted with people and countries, and when we drove through a town I leaned on folded arms out of the carriage window and acknowledged the salutes of the people who very courteously lifted their hats to me, or I greeted the maidens at the windows as though we were old acquaintances, so that they gazed after me for a long time filled with wonder and curiosity.

But at last I became very frightened. I had never counted the money in the purse I had found, everywhere I had paid large amounts to the post-masters and innkeepers, and before I realized it the purse was empty. First I thought that as soon as we drove through a lonely forest I would jump quickly out of the carriage and run away. Then I felt sorry to think of leaving the beautiful carriage empty, for under other

circumstances I would gladly have travelled to the end of the world in it.

So I sat there deep in thought and did not know what to do, when suddenly we turned off the highway. I shouted out to the postilion to know where he was going now, but I might say what I would, the fellow simply replied: 'Si, si, Signore!' and drove on over sticks and stones so that I flew from one corner of the carriage to another.

This new direction did not please me at all. The highway had passed through beautiful scenery into the setting sun as into a sea of sparkling brightness, but now the further we drove the wilder and lonelier the country became. At last the moon came out from behind the clouds and shone suddenly with so clear a light over the trees and cliffs that it was terrible to look upon. We could only travel slowly through the narrow, stony gorges, and the monotonous, unceasing rattle of the carriage echoed in the quiet night against the stony walls as though we were driving into a great vault. From numerous waterfalls hidden from sight deep in the wood came a ceaseless murmur, and the little owls kept up their incessant call 'Come too! come too!' Suddenly it seemed to me that the coachman, who, I now noticed for the first time, was not wearing livery and was not a postilion, began to look anxiously around him and to drive faster, and just as I leaned right out of the carriage a horseman came suddenly out of the bushes in front of our horses, and was immediately lost to sight again on the other side of the road. I was



quite confused, for as far as I could see in the bright moonlight it was the same little mannikin on the horse who had pecked at me with his eagle's beak at the inn. The coachman shook his head and laughed aloud at this foolish horsemanship, then turned quickly to me, said a great deal very fast, of which I unfortunately understood not a word, and drove on more rapidly still.

I was glad when I saw a light gleaming in the distance. Presently more and more lights appeared and grew larger and brighter, till at last we passed a few smoky huts hanging like swallows' nests to the face of the cliffs. As the night was warm, the doors stood open, and I could see into brightly-lit rooms where all sorts of ragged creatures crouched like shadows over their fires. We rattled on through the quiet night, along a stony path which climbed a steep hill. Sometimes the roadway was roofed in by the overhanging branches of high trees, then again the wide sky appeared and, far below, the still circle of hills, woods, and valleys. On the hilltop, in brilliant moonlight, stood a large, old castle. 'Now, God have mercy,' I cried, and was filled with excitement to see where my journey was to end.

It must have taken quite half an hour longer before we reached the top of the hill and the castle gates at last. We went into a big tower which was falling into ruins. The coachman cracked his whip three times so that it echoed through the old building, and startled a flock of jackdaws who flew out of every hole and crack,

and circled, screaming noisily, in the air. Then the carriage rolled on through the long, dark entry. The horses struck sparks from the stones with their hoofs, an enormous dog barked, the carriage thundered along the vaulted passage. The jackdaws continued to scream—and so with horrible din we entered the narrow, plastered courtyard.

A curious place, I thought to myself as the carriage halted. The carriage door was opened from the outside by a tall old man with a lantern who looked irritably at me from under bushy eyebrows. He took my arm and assisted me from the carriage as though I were an important personage. In front of the house door stood an old and very ugly woman dressed in black with a white apron and a black head-dress from which a long shred hung down to her nose. A large bunch of keys hung from her belt on one side, and in the opposite hand she held an old-fashioned candlestick with two wax candles burning in it. As soon as she saw me she began to make deep curtseys, and talked and asked endless questions. I understood nothing, so I bowed and scraped before her and felt very uneasy.

The old man, in the meantime, had searched the carriage inside and out by the light of his lantern, and growled and shook his head because he could find no luggage at all. The coachman, without asking me for a tip, drove the carriage into an old barn standing open at one side of the courtyard. The old woman begged me very courteously by signs to follow her. She led me by the light of her wax candles through a long,

narrow corridor and up a small, stone staircase. As we passed the kitchen, a few young maid-servants put their heads round the half-open door and stared at me hard, and winked and nudged one another secretly, as though they had never in their lives seen a man before. The old woman opened a door at last, and I was overcome with astonishment. For it was a large, beautiful, lordly room, with gold decorations on the ceiling, and wonderful tapestries with all kinds of figures and flowers on the walls. In the middle of the room was a table laid for a meal with meat, bread, salad, fruit, wine, and cakes to make one's heart rejoice. Between the two windows hung an enormous mirror, which reached from floor to ceiling.

I must say it all pleased me very much. I stretched myself a few times, and then paced genteelly, with long strides up and down the room. Then I could no longer resist looking at myself in so large a mirror. Certainly the new clothes which Leonard had given me suited me very well, also I had acquired in Italy a certain fiery look, but otherwise I was just exactly the same beardless youth who had left home, except for a few downy hairs on my upper lip.

The old woman continued to grind out something with her toothless mouth, and it looked exactly as though she were chewing the point of her very long nose. Then she offered me a chair, stroked my chin with her thin fingers, called me 'poverino!' looking at me all the time so roguishly out of her red-rimmed eyes that the corners of her mouth went almost half-way up her cheeks,

and finally she departed through the doorway with a deep curtesy.

I sat down at the table and a pretty young maid-servant came in to wait on me. I began making all sorts of gallant remarks to her which she did not understand, but looked queerly at me out of the corners of her eyes all the time because I was enjoying the food so much. It was a very fine meal. When I had eaten enough and got up from the table, the maid took a light from the table and led me into another room. There was a sofa, a smaller mirror, and a wonderful bed with green silk curtains. I asked her by signs if I was to sleep in it? She nodded 'Yes', but it was not yet possible, for she stayed by my side as though nailed there. At last I fetched myself a large glass of wine from the other room, and called to her '*felicissima notte!*' for I had learnt that much Italian. But as I tossed the wine down at one gulp, she broke into suppressed giggles, blushed redder and redder, went into the other room and shut the door behind her. What is there to laugh about, I wondered, and came to the conclusion that the people in Italy must all be mad.

My one fear now was that the postilion would begin to sound his horn. I listened at the window, but all was quiet outside. Let him call! I thought, undressed myself, and lay down in the wonderful bed. It was just as though I were swimming in milk and honey! Outside the window the old lime-tree in the courtyard rustled, occasionally a daw started up suddenly from the roof, but at last, full of content, I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER 6

WHEN I awoke the first rays of the sun were already playing over the green curtains. I could not remember where I was. It seemed to me that I was still travelling in the carriage, and that I had dreamed of a castle in the moonlight and of an old witch and her pale daughter.

At last I jumped quickly out of bed, dressed myself, and looked all round the room. Then I noticed a hidden door which I had not noticed yesterday. It was only ajar, so I pushed it open and saw a nice little room which looked very pleasant in the morning sunshine. Female garments were thrown untidily over a chair, and on a bed lay the maid who had waited on me the previous evening. She lay still sleeping quietly, her head upon her bare, white arms, and her dark curls falling over them. 'If she knew that the door was open!' I said to myself, and went back to my bedroom, closing and locking the door after me so that she should not have a shock when she awoke.

There was still no sound from outside. Only an early awakened bird sat on a branch which grew from the wall beside my window and sang his morning song. 'No,' I said, 'you shall not shame me, and sing alone so early the praise of God.' Seizing my fiddle, which I had put down on a side table the previous evening, I went out. In the castle there was still a deadly silence, and it took me a long time to find my way into the open air.

When at last I got outside I found myself in a

large garden descending in broad terraces, each deeper than the last, half way down the hill. But it was an ill-kept garden. The paths were all overgrown with tall grasses, the box hedges were uncut and the figures had lost their shape and stretched long noses or pointed caps yards high into the air, looking like ghosts, terrifying in the twilight. On a broken statue above a dried-up fountain there was even washing hanging up to dry; here and there in the garden they were cultivating cabbages, then came a few ordinary flowers in untidy confusion, and overgrown by weeds, with brilliant lizards darting about amongst them. Between the tall old trees there was in every direction a desolate view, one mountain peak after the other as far as the eye could reach.

After I had walked about for a time in the dawn through this wilderness, I saw on the terrace beneath me a tall, thin, pale youth in a long, brown, hooded coat, striding up and down with folded arms.

He behaved as though he had not seen me, sat down presently on a stone bench, took a book from his pocket, read very loudly as though he were preaching, gazed at intervals up into the heavens, and then rested his head in a melancholy manner on his right hand. I watched him for some time, but at last I became anxious to know why he made such extraordinary grimaces, and went quickly towards him. He sighed deeply and as I reached him sprang up in affright. He was very embarrassed, so was I; neither of us knew what to say, and we continued to bow to

each other, until at last he turned tail and disappeared with long strides among the bushes. In the meantime the sun had risen above the trees, I sprang upon the bench and fiddled merrily till the quiet woods rang with the echo. The old woman with the bunch of keys, who had already been seeking anxiously for me all over the castle to call me to breakfast, now appeared on the terrace above me, and was very astonished to hear how well I could play. The morose old man also appeared and was equally astonished; finally the maids came as well, and all stood above me, filled with astonishment, and I fingered and swung my bow more and more elaborately and actively, and played cadences and variations until at last I became quite tired.

But the strangest thing at that castle was that nobody gave a thought to travelling further. And the castle was not an inn, either, but belonged, as one of the maids told me, to a wealthy nobleman. When I sometimes asked the old woman what was the nobleman's name and where he lived, she just smiled as she had done on the first evening when I arrived, and screwed up her eyes and winked at me as though she were not quite sane. If, on a hot day, I drank a whole bottle of wine, then the maids were sure to giggle when they brought me a fresh one, and when I once by signs demanded a pipe of tobacco, everybody broke out into loud and foolish laughter. But the most wonderful thing of all was the music, which often and always on the darkest nights was played under my window. It was just faint, isolated notes on a guitar. Once

it seemed to me that somebody called 'Pst, pst', from below. I jumped quickly out of bed, and put my head out of the window. 'Hallo! who is down there?' I called. But there was no answer, and I heard only a quick movement in the bushes. The great dog in the courtyard barked once or twice when it heard the noise I made, then everything was quiet, and I never heard the music again.

Otherwise my life here was such as anybody in the world might envy. The good old porter! he knew what he was talking about when he said that in Italy the grapes grew into one's mouth. I lived in that lonely castle like an enchanted prince. Wherever I went the people showed great respect for me, though they knew that I had not a penny in my pocket. I had only to say 'Serve food', and at once wonderful foods, rice, wine, melon, Parmesan cheese, appeared. I enjoyed the food, slept in the marvellous four-poster, walked in the garden, played my fiddle, and even helped with the gardening. Often I lay for hours in the high grass in the garden, and the thin youth (he was a student and a relation of the old man, and was just spending his vacation here) wandered in circles round me, like a magician, murmuring all the time words from his book, which always sent me to sleep. So day after day passed, and at last so much good food and drink made me melancholy. My joints got so slack from doing nothing that I thought I should fall to pieces from sheer laziness.

About this time I sat one sultry afternoon on the branch of a high tree which stood on the



hillside, and rocked myself over the quiet valley. The bees hummed amidst the leaves around me, otherwise everything was still as death; there was nobody to be seen on the mountains, and in the valley below me the cows lay asleep in the long grass. Then from far away came the sound of a post-horn over the wooded hilltops, at first hardly discernible, then louder and clearer. It reminded me of an old song that I had learnt long ago in my father's mill from a wandering artisan, and I sang:

He who on travel abroad is set  
Must go with his sweetheart,  
For others will rejoice and let  
The stranger stand apart.

What do ye gloomy peaks know  
Of those former happy hours,  
Or my home far below  
Hidden by thy rocky towers?

To see the stars I always long,  
As when I visited her before;  
I love the nightingale's sweet song,  
It sang at my beloved's door.

In the morning it is my delight  
To climb, when all is quiet at hand,  
Up the highest mountain whence I can sight  
And greet thee, oh, my Fatherland.

It seemed to me as though the post-horn in the distance was playing an accompaniment to my song. As I sang it came ever nearer and nearer till at last I heard it above me in the courtyard. I jumped quickly down from the tree. The old

woman was already coming towards me from the castle with an opened parcel in her hands. 'Here is something for you as well,' she said, and handed me from her packet a tiny little letter. It was not addressed: I opened it quickly. And then I suddenly turned as red as a peony, and my heart beat so violently that the old woman noticed it, for the letter was from—my dear lady, whose writing I had often seen on notes to the steward. It was very short: 'All is now right again, all obstacles removed. I make use of this opportunity secretly, in order to be the first to send you this pleasing news. Come, hurry back. It is so desolate here, and I can hardly bear it since you left us. Aurelie.'

As I read my eyes overflowed with delight and shock and unspeakable joy. I was ashamed of showing my feelings before the old woman who was smirking horribly at me again, and I flew like an arrow into the most lonely part of the garden. There I threw myself down in the grass under the branches of the hazel and read the letter over again, learnt the words by heart, and read them again and again, and the rays of sunshine fell through the leaves upon the letters so that they intertwined before my eyes like golden and pale green and red blossoms. Isn't she married after all, I thought; was the strange officer perhaps her brother, or is he now dead, or am I mad, or—'That is of no importance,' I cried at last, jumping up, 'now it is clear that she loves me, yes, she loves me!'

When I crept out from under the bushes again the sun was setting. The sky was red, the birds

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sang merrily in the woods, the valleys were full of light, but in my heart it was a thousand times lovelier and happier!

I shouted up to the castle that they were to bring my supper into the garden this evening. I made them all come out—the old woman, the morose old man, the maids—and sit with me at table. I took out my fiddle and played in the intervals of eating and drinking. They were all merry; the old man smoothed the frown from his face and drank glass after glass, the old woman talked without ceasing, but God alone knows what about; the maids began to dance together on the lawn. At last even the pale student became inquisitive, came down from the castle, cast a few disdainful glances at the spectacle and was going to pass by. But I, quick as thought, jumped up, and before he realized what was happening, caught him by his long coat and waltzed him gaily around. He made great endeavours to dance very daintily and fashionably, and jumped about so energetically and affectedly that the sweat poured down his face, and his long coat-tails flew around us like a wheel. All the while he looked at me so curiously, with rolling eyes, that I began to be afraid of him, and suddenly let him go again.

The old woman would have liked to know what was in the letter, and why I was suddenly so gay to-day. But it was far too complicated a matter to be explained to her. I just pointed to a few cranes that were flying over us, high in the sky, and said: 'I must go away now like that,

further and further to a distant land!' At that she opened her dry old eyes very wide, and stared like a basilisk first at me then at the old man. Then I noticed that whenever I turned away they put their heads together and talked secretly and eagerly to one another, looking sideways at me as they talked.

This struck me as strange. I thought over what they could possibly be after with me. That quietened me, and, as the sun had long set, I wished everybody goodnight and went pensively to my bedroom.

Inwardly I was so happy and excited that I paced my room for a long time. Outside the wind blew heavy black clouds over the tower of the castle, it was almost impossible to see the nearest mountain peaks in the thick darkness. I thought I heard voices in the garden, so I put out my light and stood by the window. The voices seemed to draw nearer, but spoke very quietly together. Suddenly a little lantern which one of the figures carried under his cloak threw a long beam. I recognized the morose old steward and the old housekeeper. The light gleamed on the face of the old woman, which had never appeared to me more horrible, and on a long knife which she held in her hand. Then I noticed that they were both looking up at my window. Then the steward drew his cloak more closely round him and soon all was dark and quiet again.

What are they doing, I wondered, out there in the garden at this hour? I shuddered as I remembered all the murder stories I had ever

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heard, of witches and robbers who murdered human beings in order to eat their hearts. While these thoughts were still in my mind I heard footsteps first on the stairs, then along the long corridor, coming lightly, lightly towards my door, and at the same time I imagined I heard voices whispering together. I rushed quickly to the further end of the room behind a large table which I intended to hold in front of me, and as soon as anything moved to dash for the door. But in the darkness I knocked over a chair and it made a fearful noise. Immediately everything was quiet outside. I listened behind my table, and stared towards the door as though I would bore through it with my eyes until they were standing quite out of my head. When I had stayed for some time so quiet that one could have heard a fly move on the walls, I heard some one outside very gently put a key into the keyhole. Just as I was about to attack with my table, I heard the key turned three times, taken carefully out again, and then steps going softly along the corridor and down the stairs.

I drew a deep breath. Oh, oh, I thought, now they have locked you in so that it is all convenient for them when you are asleep. I examined the door quickly. I was right, it was locked, and also the other door behind which the pretty maid-servant slept. That had never before happened since I had lived in the castle.

Here I was, in a strange place, a prisoner! The beautiful lady was probably standing at her window looking over the quiet garden towards the highway, to see if I was not already striding

along by the toll-house with my fiddle, the clouds passed rapidly across the sky, time was passing—and I could not get away from here! Ah! I was so unhappy, I did not know what to do. And all the time whenever a leaf rustled outside, or a rat gnawed beneath the floor, I thought the old woman had crept in through a secret door and was listening and gliding noiselessly towards me with her long knife.

As I sat on my bed so troubled I heard again after a long interval the night music. At the first note of the guitar it was exactly as if a ray of daylight shone into my soul. I flung the window open and called gently down that I was awake. 'Pst, pst,' came the answer from below. I did not stop to think long, but put the letter and my fiddle into my pocket, swung myself out of the window, and clambered down the old broken wall, holding on to the plants which grew out of the cracks. But a few rotten tiles gave way, I began to slip, went faster and faster until I landed so solidly on both feet that my brain-box rattled.

Hardly had I arrived by this means in the garden than somebody embraced me with such vehemence that I cried aloud. My good friend, however, quickly put a finger over my mouth, took my hand, and led me into the open. There, to my astonishment, I recognized him as the dear, tall student, carrying his guitar slung round his neck on a bright ribbon. I explained to him as quickly as possible that I wanted to get out of the garden. He appeared to know that already, and led me through all sorts of secret ways to the

lowest door in the garden wall. But the door was firmly locked! Even that he had provided for, and drawing a large key from his pocket he opened it carefully.

As we got out into the wood and I wanted to ask him the best way to the nearest town, he suddenly fell on one knee before me, held one hand above his head, and began to curse and to swear so that it was horrible to hear. I had no idea what he wanted, I only heard incessantly *Idio* and *cuore* and *amore* and *furore*! But when at last he began to crawl quickly towards me on both knees it was too horrible; I perceived that he was quite mad, and without looking round I fled into the thickest part of the wood.

I heard the student shouting wildly after me. Soon another coarse voice answered from the castle. Now, I thought, they will search for me. I did not know the way, the night was dark, I might easily fall into their hands again. So I climbed to the top of a tall pine-tree and waited an opportunity of making my escape.

From there I could hear how one voice after another woke up at the castle. One or two torches appeared and threw their wild, red light over the old walls of the castle and far out into the dark night. I commended my soul to God, for the confusion was ever louder and came nearer and nearer. At last the student dashed past the foot of my tree carrying a torch, his coat-tails flying behind him in the wind. Then they all seemed, one after another, to make for the other side of the hill, the voices sounded further and further away and the wind rustled

again through the quiet wood. I climbed quickly down from the tree and ran breathlessly deeper into the valley and the night.

## CHAPTER 7

DAY and night I hastened away. For a long while I thought I heard the people from the castle following me with their calls, their torches, and their long knives. Suddenly I discovered that I was only a few miles from Rome. I was overcome with joy, for I had heard as a child at home wonderful tales of Rome the beautiful, and on Sunday afternoons, lying in front of the mill in the long grass, I had thought Rome must be like the drifting clouds above me, with marvelous hills and abysses by a blue sea, and golden gates and high, glittering towers and angels in golden robes singing. Night had fallen again and the moon shone wonderfully when at last I came out of a wood on a hillside and suddenly saw the city before me in the distance. Far away glittered the sea, the vast dome of sky sparkled and twinkled with countless stars, the eternal city, of which but a misty streak was visible, lay beneath it like a sleeping lion on the quiet earth, and hills stood round like giants keeping guard over it.

First I came to a large, lonely heath, grey and still as the grave. Only here and there stood a ruined wall, or a strange, dry, creeping plant; sometimes a night bird flew through the air, and my own shadow, long and dark, kept me company in the loneliness. They say that here a very



old city and the goddess Venus are buried, and that the old pagans sometimes rise from their graves and walk on the heath on quiet nights leading wanderers astray. But I went straight ahead and gave no opportunity for anything to attack me. For the city was rising clearer and lovelier in front of me, and the tall castles and gates and golden domes shone so beautifully in the bright moonlight, as though the angels in golden robes were really standing upon them and singing to me in the quiet night.

First I passed some small houses, then through a magnificent gate into the famous city of Rome. The moon shone between the palaces like bright daylight, but the streets were empty except for a few wretched creatures who lay like corpses on the marble steps and slept in the warm night air. The fountains murmured in the quiet squares, and the gardens rustled between and filled the air with refreshing scents.

As I lounged along, not knowing for pleasure, moonlight, and sweet scent which way to go, I heard deep in one of the gardens the sound of a guitar. Good Heavens! I think, the mad student in the long overcoat must have followed me secretly! A lady in the garden began to sing very sweetly. I stood still as though bewitched, for it was the voice of my fair lady, and the song the same she had so often sung at home by the open window.

Then I remembered the good old times, and my heart was so touched that I wanted to weep bitterly as I thought of the quiet garden in front of the castle in the early dawn, and how blissful

I had been behind my bush until the stupid fly flew up my nose. I could contain myself no longer. I clambered up the gilded scroll-work over the gates and flung myself down into the garden from which the singing came. Then I noticed that a tall white figure was gazing at me from a distance from behind a poplar-tree. It watched in astonishment as I climbed the gates, then flew through the dark garden towards the house so fast that I could hardly see the movement of its feet in the darkness. It was a pity that in jumping down from the gate I hurt my right foot, for I was obliged to stop and jerk my leg once or twice before I could start to run towards the house. But in the meantime they had managed to close doors and windows. I knocked very humbly, listened, then knocked again. Then it seemed as though a quiet whispering and giggling went on within; yes, once it seemed to me that two bright eyes peeped out through the shutters. Then all was still.

She does not know that it is I, I thought, and taking out my fiddle, which I always carry with me, I walked up and down the path in front of the house playing it, and played and sang the song of the lovely lady, and played joyfully all the songs which I used to play on beautiful summer nights in the castle garden or sitting on the bench in front of my house so that they echoed far across into the castle windows. But it was of no use, no sign or sound came from the house. So at last I put my fiddle sadly away and lay down on the doorstep, for I was very tired from my long walk. The night was warm, the flower-beds

in front of the house smelt sweetly, a fountain splashed gently further down the garden. I dreamed of heavenly blue flowers, of lovely, dark-green, lonely places where springs murmured, brooks flowed, and bright birds sang marvellously, until I fell fast asleep.

I awoke shivering in the morning air. The birds were already awake and twittered in the trees around me as though they thought me a fool. I jumped up quickly and looked all around. The fountain in the garden still splashed, but there was no sound from the house. I looked through the green shutters into one room. There was a sofa and a large round table covered with grey linen, the chairs were all standing anyhow round the room; but the outside shutters of all the windows were closed as though the house had been uninhabited for years. I felt a real horror of the empty house and garden and of the white figure of yesterday. Without turning round I ran through the quiet arbours and alleys and climbed quickly over the gate again. But there I sat bewitched as I looked down from the high gate upon the lovely city. The morning sun glowed and sparkled over the roofs and in the long quiet streets so that I had to shout aloud as, full of joy, I jumped down into the road.

But where was I to go in that strange city? And also the disturbed night and the song the beautiful lady had sung last evening were going round in my head. I sat on the stone-work of the fountain in the middle of the square, washed my eyes in the clear water, and sang:

Were I a bird,  
I know of whom I'd sing,  
Could I but fly  
I know whither my way I'd wing.

'Ha! my merry fellow, you sing like a lark at break of day!' said a young man who had approached the fountain as I was singing. To me, thus unexpectedly hearing German spoken, it was as though I suddenly heard the church bells of my own village ring out on a still Sabbath morning. 'Welcome, my dear compatriot!' I cried and jumped up, filled with pleasure. The young man smiled and looked me up and down. 'But what are you doing here in Rome?' I did not know quite what to reply, for I did not care to say that I was running after my lovely lady. 'Oh,' I replied at last, 'I'm just going round having a look at the world.' 'Oh, ho', returned the young man, laughing aloud, 'so that is your *métier*. It is mine also, to see the world, and then to paint a bit.' 'A painter!' I exclaimed, overjoyed, thinking of Leonard and Guido. But he gave me no time to say more. 'I think,' he said, 'that you will come with me and have some breakfast, and I will make a sketch of you which will be a delight.' I accepted that invitation very gladly and wandered with the painter through the empty streets where only an occasional shop was open, and here and there a pair of white arms appeared at a window, or a sleepy face looked out into the morning air.

He led me hither and thither for a long time, through a mass of confused, narrow, dark alleys, till at last we slipped into a smoky house. There

we climbed one dark staircase after another, as though we intended to climb to heaven. At last we stopped in front of a door beneath the roof, and the painter began to search feverishly through all his pockets. But he had forgotten to lock up that morning and the key was inside the room. For, as he had told me on the way, he had got up before dawn and gone out to see the city at sunrise. He just shook his head and pushed the door open with his foot.

It was a long, long, large room, in which one could have danced if the floor had not been so littered. But there lay boots, papers, clothes, overturned paint-pots all mixed up together; in the middle of the room stood a large scaffolding such as is used when picking pears, all round the walls stood large paintings. On a long wooden table was a dish on which, beside a large blob of paint, lay bread and butter. A bottle of wine stood beside it.

'Now then, eat and drink first, countryman!' cried the painter. I wanted to cut myself some bread and butter at once, but there was no knife. We had to rummage about for some time amongst the papers on the table before we found one under a big packet. Then the painter threw open the window so that the fresh morning air blew cheerfully through the whole room. There was a wonderful view right over the city to the hills where the morning sun shone gaily on white houses and vineyards. 'Hurrah for our cool green Germany there beyond the mountains!' cried the painter, drinking from the bottle of wine which he then handed to me. I drank to

him courteously, and greeted in my heart a thousand times the lovely homeland in the distance.

But the painter in the meantime had pushed the wooden scaffolding, on which a large paper was pinned, near to the window. On the paper an old hut had been cleverly sketched with a few black strokes. Therein sat the Virgin with a marvellously beautiful, happy, and yet melancholy face. At her feet on a little bed of straw lay the Infant Jesus, very friendly, but with large, earnest eyes. Outside on the threshold of the hut knelt two shepherd boys with crook and wallet. 'Look,' said the painter, 'I want to give that shepherd your head, then your face will become known to people, and, if God wills, they shall still have pleasure in it long after we are both buried and kneeling as quietly before the Holy Mother and Her Son as these happy youths here.' Thereupon he snatched at an old chair, but as he lifted it half the back came away in his hands. He put it together again quickly, pushed it in front of the staging, and I had to sit on it, turning my face sideways to the painter. I sat thus a few moments without moving. But, I don't know, soon I could bear it no longer, first I itched here, then I itched there. And besides, just opposite me hung a piece of an old mirror; I had to look into it, and while he was painting I kept making all kinds of grimaces into it from sheer boredom. The painter, noticing this, laughed aloud and motioned to me with his hand that I might now get up. My face on the shepherd was already

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finished, and was so clear that I was quite pleased with myself.

The painter went on drawing busily in the cool air, singing a song and gazing between whiles out into the lovely neighbourhood. But I cut myself some more bread and butter and marched up and down the room eating it and looking at the pictures stacked up against the wall. Two of them pleased me specially. 'Did you paint these as well?' I asked. 'Never!' he answered, they were painted by the famous masters Leonardo da Vinci and Guido Reni—but you don't know anything of them!' The end of the sentence annoyed me. 'Oh!' said I, quite coolly, 'those two masters I know as well as I know my own pocket.' He stared at me. 'How?' he asked quickly. 'Well,' said I, 'haven't I travelled with them day and night, on horseback and on foot, in a carriage till the wind whistled about my ears, and lost them both in an inn, and then travelled alone in their carriage, on and on, till the wretched carriage flew over the horrible stones on two wheels, and . . . ' 'Oho,' he interrupted, and looked at me as though he thought me mad. Then he broke into wild laughter. 'Ah!' he cried, 'now I begin to understand, you travelled with two painters Leonard and Guido?' When I agreed, he jumped up quickly and looked me over from head to foot again. 'I think,' said he, 'perhaps—do you play the fiddle?' I slapped my pocket so that the fiddle clanged. 'Well, truly,' he went on, 'there was a German countess here who was inquiring in every corner in Rome for those two painters

and a young musician with a fiddle.' 'A young countess from Germany?' I cried excitedly, 'is the porter with her?' 'I don't know about that,' replied the painter, 'I only saw her once, with one of her friends who does not live in the city. Do you know the lady?' he went on, taking the linen covering from a large picture in one corner of the room. It was as though in a dark room the shutters had suddenly been opened and the morning sun shone upon my eyes, it was—my beautiful lady; she stood in a garden in a black velvet dress, one hand raised the veil from her face, and with a quiet, happy look she gazed out into a wide and lovely distance. The longer I looked the more it seemed to me that it was the garden of the castle, and that the flowers and branches were waving gently in the breeze, and in the distance I saw my little house and the highway through the trees and the Danube and the distant blue hills.

'It is she, it is she!' I cried at last, snatched up my hat, and rushed out of the door, down the many steps, and only just heard the astonished painter call out that I should come back towards evening, then perhaps we could find out more.

## CHAPTER 8

I RUSHED hastily through the city in order to get back at once to the house where I had heard the lovely lady singing the previous evening. In the meantime the streets had become busy, ladies and gentlemen were strolling about in the sunshine, bowing and greeting one another in a



brilliant confusion, splendid carriages rattled by, and from every tower the bells called to Mass, the tones ringing wonderfully in the clear air above the other noises. I was drunk with joy and with all the noise, and in my excitement ran straight ahead until at last I did not know where I was. It all seemed bewitched, as though the quiet square with the fountain and the garden and the house had just been a dream and with the return of daylight had all vanished into the earth again.

I could not inquire my way for I did not know the name of the square. Presently it began to get very sultry, the sun's rays darted down on to the plaster like scorching arrows, people disappeared into their houses, shutters were closed again everywhere, and suddenly the streets were dead. I threw myself down at last in desperation in front of a fine, big house where a balcony on pillars threw a deep shadow, and looked first at the quiet city which seemed horrible in the sudden desolation of midday, then into the deep-blue, cloudless sky, until at last, from sheer weariness, I fell asleep. I dreamt that I lay in a quiet green meadow near my village, a warm summer rain was falling and glittered in the rays of the sun which was just setting behind the hills, and as the raindrops fell to the ground they changed into beautiful, coloured flowers, with which I was quite covered.

But how astonished I was when I awoke and found countless lovely, fresh flowers lying over and around me! I jumped up, but I could see nothing astonishing, only above me in the house

a window full of scented flowers was open and behind it a parrot screamed and chattered without ceasing. I picked up the scattered flowers, bound them together, and fastened the spray into my buttonhole. Then I began to talk a little to the parrot, for it pleased me to watch it climbing up and down in its golden cage, always falling clumsily over its big toe and making grimaces. But it immediately began to shout '*Furfante!*' at me. Though it came from an irrational creature, that angered me. I swore back at it, we both got angry, the more insults I hurled at it in German, the more it gurgled back at me in Italian.

Suddenly I heard somebody behind me laughing. I turned quickly. It was my painter of the morning. 'What nonsense are you up to now!' he said, 'I have been waiting quite half an hour for you. The air is cooler again, we will go to a garden outside the city where you will find more countrymen, and perhaps hear more about the German countess.'

I was extraordinarily pleased at this suggestion, and we started off at once, the parrot shouting insults after me for a long time.

Once outside the city we started to climb a narrow, stony path between country villas and vineyards, and after some time reached a small garden, very high up, where a number of youths and maidens sat in the open air round a table. As we entered the garden they all motioned us to stand still, and pointed to the other end of the garden. There in a creeper-covered arbour sat two beautiful women at opposite ends of a table.

One sang while the other accompanied her on a guitar. Between them, behind the table, stood a cheerful-looking man, who beat time for them with a small stick. The evening sun shone through the leaves upon the wine-bottles and the fruit which stood on the table, and upon the full, round, dazzlingly white shoulders of the lady playing the guitar. The other one seemed filled with ecstasy and sang in Italian with such astonishing art that the cords in her throat were swollen.

Just at the moment when, with eyes uplifted, she was trilling a long cadence, and the man at her side waited with uplifted stick for the instant when she should take up the refrain again, and when nobody in the whole garden dared to breathe, the garden door suddenly flew open, and a very flushed young woman followed by a youth with a noble, pale face, dashed in quarrelling furiously. The startled conductor stood with raised baton looking like a magician turned to stone, though the singer had broken off her long trill and jumped up angrily. Everybody else hissed furiously at the new arrivals. 'Barbarians!' shouted somebody from the round table, 'you have burst right into the ingenious tableau of the description given by Hoffmann, on page 347 of the *Woman's Pocketbook for 1816*, of the famous painting by Hummel which was exhibited at the Berlin Art Exhibition in the autumn of 1814.' But it was of no use. 'Oh, bother you!' replied the youth, 'with your tableaux of tableaux. My picture for the others and my maiden for myself alone! That is what

I insist on! Oh, faithless one! false one!' he began again shouting at the poor girl, 'you censorious creature, seeking in painting only the gleam of silver, and in poetry only the golden thread, you who have no beloved but only sweethearts. I wish you henceforth instead of an honest young simpleton of a painter, an old duke with a whole vault of diamonds on his nose, a gleam of silver on his bald pate, a golden thread in his few remaining hairs! Give me that wretched letter which you concealed just now! What have you been up to again? From whom is that trashy note, and to whom is it addressed?'

But the girl stood up for herself well, and the more zealously the others surrounded the angry young man and tried with great noise to console and quieten him, the more angry and mad he grew at the noise, especially as the girl could not keep her mouth shut, and she at last flew out of the confusion straight towards me, and quite unexpectedly threw herself weeping on my breast and begged for protection. I immediately took the correct position, but as nobody in the crowd was taking any notice of us she suddenly lifted her head to me and with a perfectly calm face whispered in my ear: 'You horrible toll-collector! I had to suffer all that for you. Take the odious bit of paper, you will find our address on it. Remember, at the appointed time; when you come through the gate, along the deserted street to the right.'

I could not speak for astonishment, for when I looked carefully at her, I recognized her: it was the pert lady's-maid from the castle who had

brought me the bottle of wine that beautiful Sunday evening. She had never appeared to me so beautiful as now, leaning against me, her black curls hanging over my arm. 'But, admired Mamsell,' I said, filled with astonishment. 'How do you . . . ' 'For goodness sake, be quiet, be quiet!' she replied, and before I could get back my senses, had run quickly to the other side of the garden.

In the meantime the others had quite forgotten the first cause of their quarrel, but were wrangling happily together, trying to prove to the young man that he was drunk, which was not at all the right thing for an honourable painter to be. The round little man from the harbour, who—as I discovered later—was a great connoisseur and friend of the arts, and from love of the sciences liked to take part in everything, had thrown away his baton and now roamed about, his fat face shining with friendliness, in the thickest of the movement, carrying news and calming everybody, in between whiles regretting the failure of the long cadence and the lovely tableau which he had taken so much trouble to arrange.

But in my heart it was as bright as on that happy Saturday when I had sat in front of my bottle of wine by the open window and played my fiddle far into the night. As there seemed to be no end to the noise, I took out my fiddle and, without stopping long to consider, began to play an Italian dance, such as is danced in the mountains, which I had learned there in my lonely forest castle.

All heads turned to me. 'Bravo, bravo, a delicious idea!' cried the merry connoisseur, and ran round to everybody, in order to arrange what he called a rural *divertissement*. He opened the dance, giving his hand to the lady who had played in the arbour. He danced with amazing ability, described all sorts of figures on the grass with his toes, executed trills with his feet, and capered quite passably. But he had soon had enough, for he was rather corpulent. He made ever shorter and clumsier leaps, till at last he left the circle altogether, and coughed violently and wiped the sweat from his face with a snow-white handkerchief. In the meantime, the youth, who had become quite sensible again, had fetched castanets from the inn, and before I realized what was happening they were all dancing gaily under the trees. The setting sun threw a few rosy gleams amongst the dark shadows and over the old walls and the ivy-covered pillars which lay half sunken in the garden, while on the other side one saw, far below the vineyards, the city of Rome lying in the evening light. They all danced charmingly on the grass in the clear, still air, and my heart laughed as I watched the slim maidens, the lady's-maid in their midst, dancing round the arbours, raising their arms like pagan wood-nymphs, and each time sounding their castanets. I could not restrain myself any longer, I sprang amongst them and danced gaily, fiddling all the time.

I may have been jumping round in the circle for some time and never noticed that the others

were beginning to tire and were leaving the dance place. Somebody behind me pulled hard at my coat-tails. It was the lady's maid. 'Don't be a fool,' she said softly, 'you are jumping about like a he-goat! Study that paper carefully, and follow soon; the beautiful young countess waits.' And with that she slipped out of the garden gate in the twilight, and quickly disappeared amongst the vineyards.

My heart was beating fast; I should have liked to follow at once. Luckily, as it was already dark, a waiter came out and lit a lamp over the garden gate. I went nearer and hastily took out the paper. On it, rather illegibly written, was a description of the gate and the street, much as the lady's-maid had said. Underneath was written, 'Eleven o'clock at the small door.'

That meant long hours of waiting! But in spite of that I wanted to set out at once, for I had now neither rest nor peace; but the painter who had brought me came and spoke to me. 'Did you speak to the girl?' he asked, 'I can't see her anywhere now; she is the German countess's lady's-maid.' 'Quiet, quiet,' I replied, 'the countess is still in Rome.' 'Well, so much the better,' said the painter, 'come and drink her health!' and in spite of my struggles he drew me back into the garden.

There it had in the meantime become quite empty and desolate. The merry guests, each with his sweetheart on his arm, were wandering back towards the city; one could hear them in the quiet of the evening talking and laughing amongst the vineyards, getting further and

further away, till at last their voices were lost in the rustling of the trees and the murmur of the stream in the valley below. I was left alone with my painter and Eckbrecht—that was the name of the young painter who had caused such a commotion earlier. The moon shone beautifully between the tall, dark trees upon the garden, a taper flickered in the wind on the table before us and shimmered on the stains of the wine which had been spilt. I had to sit down, and my painter chattered to me about my coming hither, my journey, and my future plans. Eckbrecht had taken the pretty young serving-maid who brought us wine from the inn, and seated her on his knee; then he put a guitar into her hands and taught her how to thrum out a tune on it. She soon managed it with her little hands, and they sang together an Italian song, first he a verse, then she, and it was charming to hear in the lovely still evening air. When the girl was called back into the house Eckbrecht leaned back on the bench with the guitar, put up his feet on a chair in front of him, and sang alone a number of German and Italian songs, taking no further notice of us. The stars shone marvellously in the clear sky, the whole neighbourhood shone silver in the moonlight; I thought of my fair lady, and of my distant home, and forgot completely the painter who sat beside me. At intervals Eckbrecht had to tune his guitar, and that made him angry each time. He screwed and pulled at the instrument until finally he broke a string. At that he threw the guitar from him and jumped up. Then he noticed for the



first time that my painter had laid his head down on his arms on the table and fallen asleep. He hastily threw round himself a white cloak which had been hanging from a branch beside him, stopped suddenly as though thinking, looked sharply first at my painter and then at me, sat hastily down at the table opposite me, cleared his throat, pulled at his cravat, and suddenly began to hold forth to me. 'Dear listener and compatriot!' he said, 'as the bottle is almost empty, and as morality without doubt is the first duty of a citizen, when virtues decline I feel myself driven by the sympathy of a fellow countryman to remind you of your morals. One might think,' he went on, 'you were just a youth, though your coat has seen its best days; one might perhaps admit you had just made wonderful leaps like a Satyr; yes, some people might even assert that you are just a vagabond, because you are here in the country and play the fiddle; but I take no notice of such superficial judgments, I judge by your finely pointed nose, I think you are a genius on holiday.' I was annoyed by these fallacious arguments and wanted to reply, but he gave me no chance. 'Look,' said he, 'how puffed up you are at once by that bit of praise. Retire into yourself and think over this dangerous failing. We geniuses—for I also am one—trouble just as little about the world as the world about us; rather we stride without special formalities in our seven-leagued boots, which we bring with us into the world, straight towards eternity. Oh, most sorrowful, uncomfortable, straddling position, with one

foot in the future where there is nothing but dawn and the faces of future generations, the other leg still in the middle of Rome on the Piazza del Popolo, where the entire present generation thinks it a good opportunity to come as well and hangs on to one's boot as though they wanted to pull one's leg out. And all that movement, wine-bibbing, and starvation solely for deathless eternity. And look at my colleague there on the bench; time is too long for him, what will he do with eternity? Yes, worthy colleague, you and I and the sun all rose early this morning, and have brooded and painted all day, and everything was lovely—and now sleepy night sweeps her furred sleeves across the world and wipes out all the colours.' He went on and on talking, his hair ruffled from so much dancing and drinking, and his face deathly white in the moonshine.

His appearance had struck such terror into me that when he turned and formally addressed the sleeping painter I took the opportunity to slip round the table and out of the garden without his noticing me. Alone and happy at heart I went down the near-by steps into the wide, moonlit valley.

The clocks in the city struck ten. Behind me in the quiet night I heard an occasional note on a guitar, and sometimes the voices of the two painters, who were also now on their homeward way.

Inside the gate I turned immediately into the street on the right and, my heart beating rapidly, went on between the quiet houses and gardens.

But how astonished I was to find myself suddenly in the square with the fountain, which I had not been able to find during the day; there, bathed in loveliest moonlight, was the lonely garden house again, and the beautiful lady was singing again the same Italian song as yesterday evening. Full of joy I ran to the little door, then to the house door, then pushed with all my strength on the big garden door, but all were firmly fastened. Then I suddenly remembered that eleven o'clock had not yet struck. I was furious with time for moving so slowly, but good manners forbade me to climb over the garden gate as I had done last evening. So I walked up and down in the deserted square for a while and then sat down again, full of thoughts and quiet longings, on the stone fountain.

The stars twinkled in heaven, the square was empty and quiet, I listened happily to the beautiful lady's song which came across to me through the splashing of the fountain. Then I suddenly saw a white figure coming from the opposite side of the square and going directly towards the little garden door. I looked intently and saw that it was the wild painter in his white cloak. He hastily drew out a key, unlocked the gate, and before I realized what was happening he was inside the garden.

Now I had from the beginning a particular grudge against this painter because of his unreasonable harangues. But now I lost all control of my temper. That dissolute painter is certainly drunk again, I thought, he must have got the key from the lady's-maid and now he is

going to surprise, betray, attack the beautiful lady. And so I plunged through the little door which he had left open.

When I got inside everything was quiet and deserted. The French windows of the garden house stood open and a milk-white light shone out and fell upon the grass and flowers in front of the house. I looked in from a distance. In a lovely green room, only faintly illuminated by one white lamp, lay my beautiful lady on a silken couch, her guitar in her hands, giving no thought in her innocence to the danger from outside.

I had no time to stand and gaze upon her for I noticed at once that the white figure was warily approaching the house through the bushes on the other side. And the lady sang so dolefully from the house that I was cut to the quick. Without stopping long to think, I tore down a hefty branch from a tree and ran straight at Whitemantle, shouting at the top of my voice, '*Mordio!*' till the garden rang.

The painter, seeing me approach so unexpectedly, made good his escape, shouting with terror. I shouted still louder, he ran towards the house, I after him—and I had nearly caught him when I got my feet entangled in some tiresome flower-stems and fell headlong before the door of the house.

'Ah! so it is you, you fool!' I heard some one call out, 'you nearly frightened me to death.' I jumped up quickly, and as I wiped the sand and earth from my eyes, the lady's-maid stood before me, the white mantle slipping from her

shoulders. 'But,' said I, quite taken aback, 'was not the painter here?' 'Yes, certainly,' she replied pertly, 'at least his cloak, which he lent me at the gate because I felt cold.' As we talked the lovely lady had jumped up from her couch and came towards us. My heart beat as though it would burst. But how startled I was, when I looked carefully, to see, instead of my beautiful lady, a complete stranger!

It was a tall, fat, massive lady with a proud, hooked nose and very arched eyebrows, with a beauty that was startling. She looked so majestically at me with her great sparkling eyes that I was overcome with awe. I was quite embarrassed and went on bowing to her and eventually tried to kiss her hand. But she snatched it away and began to talk to her maid in Italian, of which I understood no word.

In the meantime the whole neighbourhood had been roused by the shouting. Dogs barked, children cried, men's voices could be heard coming nearer and nearer. The lady looked at me once again, her eyes boring into me like gimlets, and then, with a proud and unnatural laugh, slammed the door in my face. The maid grasped me by the coat and forced me towards the garden door.

'You have done something really silly again,' she said angrily. I was angry also. 'Go to the devil!' I said, 'didn't you tell me yourself to come here?' 'That is just it,' cried the maid, 'my lady means so well towards you, throws flowers from the window, sings songs—and this is her reward! But there is nothing to be done with

you, you just trample on your luck.' 'But,' I replied, 'I meant the beautiful lady from Germany.' 'Ah!' she interrupted, 'she returned to Germany long ago, together with all your mad amour. Go along back there yourself! Besides, she is yearning for you, and you will be able to play the fiddle together and gaze at the moon, but don't let me see you again!'

By this time there was a horrible noise behind us. From the next garden people with cudgels began climbing hastily over the fence, others, swearing loudly, began to search the paths, desperate faces under night-caps appeared in the moonlight peering over the hedges; it was just as though the devil was suddenly producing a rabble from every hedge and bush. The maid did not hesitate, 'There goes the thief!' she cried to the people, pointing to the other side of the garden. Then she thrust me quickly out of the garden and slammed the gate behind me.

There I stood again, beneath God's clear sky, in the quiet square, quite alone, as I had been the evening before. The fountain, which had sparkled so merrily in the moonlight, as though angels were clambering up and down in it, was still playing, but now all my joy and pleasure had fallen into the basin. I determined to turn my back for ever on Italy the false, with its mad painters, its pomegranates, and lady's-maids, and marched straight away out through the gate of the city.

## CHAPTER 9

THE trusty mountains stand on guard,  
 'Who goes there?' ere it is light  
 Across the heath from out the night!  
 But I know those watchmen hard,  
 My laugh rings out on joyous note  
 And I shout aloud with open throat  
 The password and the battle-cry,  
 'Long live Austria!' My country I am nigh.

Then the earth with recognition teems,  
 And the brook, the woods and birds  
 Greet me with familiar words,  
 Whilst far below the Danube gleams.  
 St. Stephen's Tower, too, far away  
 Peeps o'er the hill and says good-day;  
 And if 'tis not, t'will soon be near,  
 'Long live Austria!' country so dear.

I stood on a high hill from which I could get my first sight of Austria, and waved my hat gleefully, and was singing the last verse when suddenly, from behind me in the wood, the music of wind instruments joined in. I turned quickly round and saw three youths in long blue cloaks, one playing an oboe, one a clarinet, and the third, who had an old three-cornered hat on his head, a French horn—they played my accompaniment till the whole wood resounded. And I, not to be behindhand, took out my fiddle and played and sang gaily with them. At that they looked thoughtfully at one another; the horn-player was the first to let his puffed cheeks fall in again, and put aside his horn, and presently they were all quiet and looked at me. I stopped

in astonishment and returned their gaze. 'We thought,' said the horn-player at last, 'that as the gentleman is wearing so long a frock-coat, the gentleman must be a travelling Englishman, walking here to enjoy the beauties of nature; and we thought we could earn a viaticum. But it appears that the gentleman is himself a musician.' 'Really a toll collector,' I replied, 'and come direct here from Rome, but as I have not collected anything for a long time, I have struggled through by playing my violin.' 'Doesn't bring in much nowadays!' said the horn-player, who in the meantime had returned to the wood and was fanning with his tricorn a small fire which they had lit there. 'Wind instruments are better,' he added, 'when people are sitting down to their midday meal, and we enter the courtyard unnoticed and all three begin to blow with all our strength—a servant comes rushing out at once with money or food, in order to get rid of the noise. But will the gentleman not take something to eat with us?'

By this time the fire was blazing merrily in the wood; the morning was fresh, and we all sat round on the grass and two of the musicians took a small pot containing coffee and even milk from the fire, took some bread from their pockets and dipped and drank alternately, and it tasted so good to them that it was a real pleasure to watch. The horn-player, however, said, 'I can't drink that black stuff,' and handed me half a large sandwich, after which he brought out a bottle of wine. 'Will the gentleman take a drink also?' I swallowed a good draught, but was obliged to



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put down the bottle and grimace, for it tasted like vinegar. 'Local wine,' said the horn-player, 'but the gentleman has spoiled his German taste in Italy.'

Thereupon he rummaged in his knapsack, and from amongst all kinds of rubbish drew out an old torn map on which there was still a picture of the Emperor in full regalia, the sceptre in the right hand, the orb in the left. He spread this map carefully on the ground, the others drew nearer, and they began to consult together which route they should take.

'The vacation is nearly over,' said one, 'we must turn left at Linz, then we shall arrive in good time at Prague.' 'Now really,' cried the horn-player, 'where are you trying to lead us? nothing but woods and charcoal-burners, no refined artistic taste, no sensible free board and lodging!' 'Oh, nonsense!' answered the other, 'I like the peasants best, just because they know best where the shoe pinches, and are not so particular if one occasionally plays a false note.' 'That means that you have no *point d'honneur*,' replied the horn-player, '*odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, says the Latinist.' 'Well, there must be churches on the way,' suggested the third, 'so we can stay with the priest.' 'Your most obedient servant,' replied the horn-player, 'they give small money and big sermons that we should not wander so aimlessly about the world, but apply ourselves more to learning, especially when they smell out the future colleague in me. No, no, *Clericus clericum non decimat*. But why all this great hurry? The professors are still sitting about in

Karlsbad, and won't be so particular to a day.' 'Yes, *distinguendum est inter et inter*,' replied the other; '*quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*.'

By now I realized that these were students from Prague, and felt a great respect for them, especially as Latin flowed from their tongues like water. 'Is the gentleman a student also?' inquired the horn-player. I replied modestly that I had a great wish to study but no money. 'That does not matter,' cried the horn-player, 'we have neither gold nor rich friends. But a clever man must know how to help himself. *Aurora Musis amica*, which means do not waste too much time on breakfast. But when the mid-day bell strikes from the towers and across the town from hill to hill, and the schoolboys suddenly dash with loud shrieks out of the dark schools and pour through the streets in the sunshine, then we go to the Capucin monastery to the father steward, and find a table laid for us, and even if it is not laid, there is a full plate for each of us on it, and we ask no questions but eat, and at the same time improve our Latin. Does the gentleman understand? that is how we study day after day. And when the vacation begins and the others go to their parents, then we wander, with our instruments under our cloaks, through the alleys and out of the gate, and the whole world is before us.'

I don't know why—but somehow, as he talked, it went right through me, that such learned people should wander so forlornly about the world. And I thought of myself, that it was just the same with me, and the tears came into my

eyes. The horn-player stared at me. 'But that does not matter,' he said, 'I should not like to travel with horses and coffee and clean beds and night-caps and boot-jacks all ordered in advance. That is just the best part of it, that when we start out in the early morning and the birds of passage fly high above us, we do not know which chimney is smoking for us that day, and cannot tell what special piece of luck will meet us before the day is over.' 'Yes,' said the other, 'and wherever we turn up and take out our instruments, all is gaiety, and when we arrive at mid-day at some country-house and begin to play in the courtyard, the servants dance together before the front door, and the quality have the dining-room doors opened so that they can hear better, and through the doors comes the clatter of plates and the smell of roast meat, and the maids waiting at table almost twist their heads off trying to see the musicians.' 'True,' cried the horn-player, 'let the others go to their lectures; we study in the meantime from the great picture-book the Almighty has opened for us outside. Yes, believe me, sir, we shall make the right kind of parsons, we shall have a message for the peasants, and shall hammer the pulpit with our fists so that the hearts of the clods sitting under us will nearly burst with edification and contrition.'

Hearing them talk like this made me feel so merry that I wanted to start straight away studying with them. I could not hear enough, for I like to be with educated people, from whose conversation one can profit. But it never came to a really sensible discourse, for one of the

students had already taken alarm because the vacation was so nearly at an end, and had promptly put his clarinet together, propped up a sheet of music against his knees, and was practising a difficult passage from a Mass in which he was to play when they got back to Prague. There he sat, fingering and blowing, often such false notes that it went through and through me, and we could often not understand our own words.

Suddenly the horn-player shouted in his deep voice, 'Tip-top! I've got it!' and rapped happily on the map at his side. The other stopped his energetic blowing for a moment, and looked at him in amazement. 'Listen,' said the horn-player, 'not far from Vienna is a castle, at the castle is a porter, and that porter is my cousin! Dearest co-disciples, we must go there and make our compliments to him, and he can be relied on to see about our moving on further!' When I heard that I started up. 'Doesn't he play the bassoon?' I asked, 'and isn't he a tall, straight person with a large, aristocratic nose?' The horn-player nodded his head. But I embraced him with such joy that his tricorne hat fell from his head, and we all immediately agreed together to sail on the mail-boat down the Danube to the castle of my beautiful countess.

We reached the river-bank just as the boat was ready for departure. The fat host from the inn opposite which the boat had been tied up all night stood at his ease in his doorway, which he quite filled, and made all kinds of jokes and remarks in farewell, while girls looked out of every

window with friendly nods at the sailors who were just carrying the last parcels on board. An elderly gentleman, wearing a grey overcoat and a black scarf, who was going to travel also, stood on the river-bank talking very eagerly to a slender youth in long leather trousers and tight scarlet jacket who was riding a magnificent horse. To my great astonishment it seemed to me that they kept looking across and talking about me. At last the old man laughed, the youth cracked his whip, and, with the larks rising round him, rode rapidly away through the morning sunshine into the glittering countryside.

In the meantime the students and I had put all our money together. The captain laughed and shook his head when the horn-player paid him our fares in the small copper coins which we had with great difficulty got together from all our pockets. But I shouted with joy when I saw the Danube before me again; we quickly went on board, the captain gave the signal, and we sailed rapidly along in the loveliest morning air between hills and meadows, down the Danube.

The birds sang in the woods, and from both sides came the sound of the village bells, and from high above us the song of innumerable larks. On the ship a canary sang so jubilantly that it was a joy to hear.

This canary belonged to a pretty young girl who was also on board. Its cage stood by her side, on the other side she held a bundle of fine clothes under her arm, and she sat there quite alone and looked with satisfaction first at her new shoes which peeped out from under her

skirt, then down into the water, and the morning sun shone on her white forehead above which her dark hair was very carefully parted. I noticed that the students would have liked to start a courteous discourse with her, for they passed back and forth in front of her, and the horn-player cleared his throat each time, and pulled at his cravat or his hat. But none of them had sufficient courage, and the girl lowered her eyes every time they approached her.

They were especially embarrassed by the elderly gentleman in the grey overcoat who sat on the opposite side of the boat, and whom they had immediately put down as a priest. He was reading in his breviary, but he often looked up from the book, whose gold lettering and brightly coloured holy pictures glistened in the sun, to gaze at the beautiful country. At the same time he noticed exactly what was going on around him, and he must have recognized the birds by their feathers, for before long he addressed one of the students in Latin, whereupon they all three went up to him, took off their hats, and answered him in Latin.

In the meantime I had seated myself right up in the bows of the boat, dangling my legs happily over the water, and while the boat flew onwards and the waves rippled and foamed beneath me, looked into the blue distance, and watched how towers and castles appeared on the green banks, grew and grew, and finally disappeared again behind us. Had I but wings to-day! I thought, and at last, filled with impatience, pulled out my dear fiddle and played all my oldest pieces,

those which I had learned at home or at the castle of my beautiful lady.

Suddenly some one tapped me on the shoulder from behind. It was the priest, who had laid aside his book and been listening to me for a little while. 'Ha,' he said, laughing at me, 'ha, ha, sir, *ludi magister*, you have forgotten food and drink.' He bade me put away my fiddle and invited me to eat with him, leading me to a pretty little arbour, which had been built by the sailors amidships out of young birch- and pine-trees. A table had been placed in it, and I and the students, and even the young girl, had to sit on the barrels and boxes around it.

The priest now unwrapped a big cold roast joint and pieces of bread and butter carefully wrapped in paper, took out of a box several bottles of wine and a silver-gilt cup, poured out, tasted, smelt, and tasted again, and then offered to each of us. The students sat bolt upright on their barrels and ate and drank only a little out of pure reverence. Even the girl only sipped at the cup, looking shyly first at me, then at the students; but the more she looked at us the more courageous she became.

At last she began to tell the priest that she was going out to service for the first time, and was travelling to the castle of her employers. I blushed hotly, for she mentioned the castle of the lovely lady. So that is my future parlour-maid, I thought, and stared at her, feeling quite giddy. 'There will soon be a wedding at that castle,' said the priest. 'Yes,' replied the girl, who would gladly have heard more about it, 'they say they have long been secretly in love,

but the countess would never agree to it.' The priest replied only 'Hm, hm,' while he filled up his cup and sipped at it with a thoughtful air. I had put both my elbows on the table and leaned forward in order not to miss a word of the conversation. The priest noticed me: 'I can tell you,' he said, 'the countesses have sent me out to see if the bridegroom is not somewhere here in this neighbourhood. A lady in Rome wrote that he left there some time ago.' When he began to talk of the lady in Rome I blushed again. 'Does your Reverence know the bridegroom?' I asked, quite confused. 'No,' replied the old gentleman, 'but he is said to be a merry fellow.' 'Oh, yes,' I said hastily, 'a bird which escapes from every cage as quickly as possible, and sings merrily when he is at liberty again.' 'And roams about in foreign lands,' added the priest calmly, 'and wanders the streets by night and sleeps on doorsteps by day.' That annoyed me very much. 'Reverend sir,' I cried, 'you have been falsely informed. The bridegroom is a moral, slim, promising youth, who has lived luxuriously in an old castle in Italy, associating only with countesses, famous artists, and lady's-maids; who knows quite well how to keep his money, if only he had some, who . . .' 'Now, now, I did not know that you were so well acquainted with him,' the priest interrupted me, and laughed so heartily that he became quite blue in the face, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. 'But I heard,' began the girl, 'that the bridegroom is a great and rich man.' 'Ah, yes, oh, yes, yes, confusion, nothing but confusion!'



cried the priest, and could not stop laughing until at last it made him cough. When he had recovered himself a little, he raised his cup high and cried: 'Long live the bridal couple!' I did not know what to make of the priest and his talk, but the thought of Rome made me feel too ashamed to announce to all these people that I myself was the long-lost happy bridegroom.

The cup went merrily round again, the priest had friendly words for all of us, so that we all grew fond of him and all began to talk gaily together. Even the students grew more and more talkative and related their adventures travelling in the mountains, till at last they even took out their instruments and began to play merrily. The cool air came through the branches, the evening sun already gilded the woods and valleys which flew rapidly past us, and the river-banks echoed the sounds of the horn. And the priest became more and more jolly as the music played, and began to tell us merry stories of his youth: how he had also spent his vacations walking in the hills and valleys, often hungry and thirsty but always happy, and that really the whole university time was nothing but a long vacation between the narrow, dreary school-time and the earnest work of life—at which the students drank round again and began another song, the sound of which was carried right away into the mountains.

And now towards the south wing  
The birdies on their way.  
And many merry travellers swing  
Their hats in the dawn's first ray.

Now, too, the students wend their way  
 Out of the ancient city,  
 And as they go we hear them play  
 A tuneful farewell ditty.  
 Adieu to all both far and wide,  
 Know, Prague, we make our way outside.  
*Et habeat bonam pacem,*  
*Qui sedet post fornacem!*

At night we come to some small town,  
 Its windows from afar gleam white,  
 And all the villagers look down  
 And talk as we pass through the night.  
 Each one of us right merrily sings,  
 So that we have that thirst, I think,  
 Which music-making always brings.  
 'Come, landlord, bring a good long drink',  
 But see, is that not fine,  
 For with a jug of wine  
*Venit ex sua domo*  
*Beatus ille homo!*

Now, while the trees do bend and sway,  
 The cold north wind doth blow,  
 As through the fields we make our way,  
 Soaked through by rain and snow.  
 Our mantles flying in the breeze,  
 And torn is every shoe;  
 We'll play before we freeze,  
 And let us sing thereto:  
*Beatus ille homo,*  
*Qui sedet in sua domo,*  
*Et sedet post fornacem*  
*Et habet bonam pacem!*

I, the sailors, and the girl, though we understood no Latin, joined in triumphantly in the last lines, but my shout was the happiest of all,

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for I saw already in the far distance my little customs-house, and soon afterwards, lit by the evening sun, the castle appeared above the tree-tops.

## CHAPTER 10

THE ship reached its destination, we landed quickly and scattered in all directions like birds when their cage is suddenly opened. The priest bade us a hurried farewell and disappeared with great strides towards the castle. The students, on the other hand, hastened to a remote thicket, there to brush their clothes, wash themselves, and shave one another. And last, the new maid went off with her canary and her bundle of clothes under her arm to the inn below the castle, to get permission from the landlady, whom I had recommended to her as a good sort of woman, to change into her best clothes before she appeared at the castle. But the lovely evening went straight to my heart, and when they had all disappeared, I did not stop long to think, but ran straight off to the castle garden.

My customs-house, which I was obliged to pass, still stood in its old place, the high trees in the castle garden still rustled above it, a goldfinch which had always sung her evening hymn from the chestnut-tree in front of the window was still singing there, as though nothing in the world had changed since I left. The window of the house was open, and full of joy I ran and put my head into the room. Nobody was there, but the hanging clock ticked quietly on, the writing-

table still stood in the window and the long pipe in a corner. I could not resist, I sprang through the window and sat down at the desk where the great account-book was. The sunshine fell again through the branches of the chestnut-tree in front of the window, green-gold upon the figures in the open book, the bees murmured again in the open window, the goldfinch sang merrily from the tree. But suddenly the door opened, and a tall old collector in my spotted dressing-gown came in! He stood still in the doorway when he saw me so unexpectedly, took his spectacles off quickly and looked angrily at me. I was not a little startled, and without saying a word fled out of the front door and through the little garden, where I soon caught my feet in the potato-plants which the old collector, taking the porter's advice, had planted in place of my flowers. I heard him follow me out of the door, abusing me roundly, but I was already sitting on the high garden wall, looking with beating heart down into the castle garden.

Such a scent and sparkle and jubilation of all the birds was there; the lawns and walks were empty, but the burnished tree-tops bowed before me in the evening breeze as though they wanted to bid me welcome, and on one side in the distance the Danube sparkled between the trees.

Suddenly I heard from some distance away in the garden some one sing:

Sometimes joy silence doth impart,  
 Whilst o'er the earth and through the trees  
 Rustles a murmuring, dreamy breeze,  
 Which seems from mortal man apart.

The voice and the song seemed so curious and yet so well known, as though I had somewhere and sometime heard them in a dream. I thought for a long, long time. "That is Guido!" I cried joyfully at last, and swung myself quickly down into the garden—it was the very song he had sung that summer evening on the balcony of the Italian inn, where I saw him for the last time.

He went on singing, and I sprang over flower-beds and hedges seeking him. As I suddenly came out from among the last rose-bushes, I stood still as though bewitched. For on the lawn by the swans' lake, where the setting sun shone right upon her, on a stone seat sat my beautiful lady, in a lovely dress, with a wreath of red and white roses in her black hair, her eyes cast down, playing with her riding-whip just as she had played at that time in the boat when I had to sing the song of the fair lady to her. Opposite her sat another young lady, the dark curls on her white neck turned towards me, singing to a guitar, while the swans circled slowly round on the lake. My beautiful lady raised her eyes and cried aloud when she saw me. The other lady turned so quickly towards me that her curls fell into her face, then, breaking into uncontrollable laughter, she jumped up from her seat and clapped three times with her hands. Immediately a crowd of little girls in short, white frocks with red and green sashes came out of the rose-bushes, so many that I could not imagine where they had all hidden. They held a long garland of flowers in their hands and quickly made a circle round me, dancing and singing:

We bring to you the virgin's crown  
 Of violet-blue silk,  
 To dance and frolic now come down,  
 The bride has donned the wedding-gown,  
 Beautiful green virgin crown,  
 Violet-blue silk.

That was out of *Der Freischütz*. I began to recognize some of the little singers as children from the village. I pinched their cheeks and tried to escape from the circle, but the pert little things would not let me free. I could not make out what it was all about, and stood there quite astonished.

Suddenly a young man in a fine hunting costume came out of the bushes. I could hardly believe my eyes, for it was the merry Leonard! The little girls broke the circle and stood as though suddenly bewitched, all quite still on one leg, the other remaining in the air, and the garland of flowers held with both hands high over their heads. Leonard took the hand of the beautiful lady, who had remained quite still and only glanced across at me once or twice, and led her over to me, saying:

'Love—all learned people are agreed upon this—is the most courageous attribute of the human heart, it lays low bulwarks of rank and class with one fiery glance: the world is too small and eternity too short for it. Yes, it is really the poet's mantle which every visionary wraps round him once in this cold world, when he sets out on his journey to Arcady. And the further apart two loving hearts travel, the greater the curve in which the wind blows the iridescent mantle

behind them, the more audacious and surprising the folds into which it falls, and longer and longer grows the robe behind the lovers, so that other people can hardly move without falling over several of such trains. Oh, dearest sir, collector and bridegroom, although you even got as far as the city on the Tiber in this mantle, yet the little hand of your future bride held fast to the end of the train, and though you jerked and fiddled and made a fuss, you nevertheless had to return to the silent spell of her lovely eyes. And now, as it has happened, you two, dear, foolish people! wrap the holy mantle around you, so that the world around you disappears—love one another like the little rabbits and be happy!"

Leonard had hardly finished his sermon when the other young lady, the one who had been singing, came towards me and placed a wreath of fresh myrtle on my head, singing very teasingly while pressing the wreath well into my hair, and holding her little face close to mine:

Therefore am I wedded to thee,  
Therefore is thy head now crowned;  
An arrow from thy bow did pierce me  
And my heart in love was drowned.

Then she stepped back a pace or two. "Do you still remember the robbers who shook you out of the tree that night?" she asked, making me a curtsy, and looking so gaily at me that my heart leapt. And without waiting for my answer she moved round me, "truly, just the same, without any foreign tang! But, no, look at these fat pockets!" she cried suddenly to my fair lady,

'fiddle, clothes, razors, travelling-bags, all mixed together!' She turned me round and round and could not stop laughing. The lovely lady stood quite still, and dared not raise her eyes for shame and confusion. It seemed to me that she was secretly angry at all this talk and nonsense. Suddenly her tears began to fall and she hid her face on the other lady's breast, who looked at her first in astonishment and then tenderly embraced her.

But I stood there quite astonished. For the more I looked at the strange lady, the more clearly I saw that she was none other than—the young painter Guido!

I did not know what to make of it and was just about to begin asking questions when Leonard went over and whispered something to her. 'Does he still not know?' I heard him ask. She shook her head. He thought for an instant. 'No, no,' he said at last, 'he must be told everything at once, or fresh gossip and muddle will arise.'

'Collector,' he said, turning to me, 'we have not much time, but please be good enough to get over all your wonderings at once, so that you do not later raise an old story amongst the people and cause more imaginings and inventions by your questions, surprise, and head-shaking.' He drew me further into the bushes while the young lady played with my fair one's discarded riding-whip, making passes in the air and tossing her curls into her face, in spite of which I could see a deep blush rise to her forehead.

'Now,' said Leonard, 'the lady Flora here, who pretends that she hears and knows nothing of



the whole story, had given her heart away in exchange for that of somebody. Then another came, and with drum and trumpet laid his heart at her feet and begged for hers in exchange. But somebody has her heart and she has his, and that somebody does not want his heart back and will not give up hers. Everybody shrieked aloud—but you have probably never read a novel?’ I agreed that I had not. ‘Well, then you have taken part in one. In short: there was such confusion about those hearts, that somebody—that is I—had to find a way out of the difficulty. One warm summer night I mounted my horse, put the lady Flora—as the painter Guido—on another, and off we rode, southwards, where I intended to hide her in one of my isolated castles in Italy, until the confusion about the hearts was over. But on the way somebody tracked us down, and from the balcony of that foreign inn where you slept so soundly through your watch, Flora caught a glimpse of our pursuer.’ ‘Ah, ha, the hunchback?’ ‘Was a spy. We withdrew secretly into the woods and let you go on alone in the post-chaise. That deceived our pursuer and even my people at the castle, who were hourly expecting the disguised Flora, and with more zeal than penetration took you to be the lady. Even here at the castle people thought that Flora was there; they made inquiries—they wrote to her—did you get the letter?’ At these words I pulled the paper out of my pocket. ‘This letter?’ ‘It is mine,’ said the lady Flora, who had not till then appeared to take any notice of our conversation, snatching the letter out of my hand, reading it

through hastily, and thrusting it into her bodice. 'And now,' said Leonard, 'we must go quickly into the castle where they are all awaiting us. And to finish, as is natural and due to any well-bred romance: discovery, regret, reconciliation, we are all happy together again, and to-morrow is the wedding!'

While he was still talking a terrific noise came from the bushes: drums and trumpets, horns and trombones; cannon were let off amid cheers, the little girls began to dance again, and out of every bush faces appeared as though they were growing on the branches. I jumped yards into the air, and from side to side, but as it was already dark I only recognized the old faces slowly. The old gardener beat the drum, the students from Prague, wrapped in their cloaks, made music between the beats of the drum, and beside them the porter was fingering his bassoon like one possessed. When I saw him there so unexpectedly I ran to him and embraced him heartily. That put him out completely. 'Well really, even if he has travelled to the ends of the earth, he is and remains a fool!' he cried to the students, and blew angrily on.

In the meantime my lovely lady had escaped from the confusion and was flying like a frightened deer further into the garden. I just saw her in time and hastened after her. The musicians in their eagerness did not notice it, they thought afterwards we had gone to the castle, and the whole lot of them started off thither with music and great noise.

But we had arrived almost at the same

moment at a summer-house standing in the gardens, with wide-opened windows looking across a wide valley. The sun had long set behind the hills, only a golden shimmer remained in the warm twilight, and the rushing sound of the Danube rose clearer and clearer as the evening grew stiller. I gazed steadily at the lovely countess, who, still warm from running, stood so close to me that I could distinctly hear the beating of her heart. But now that I was suddenly all alone with her, I was tongue-tied with respect. At last I took courage and took her little white hand—whereupon she drew me to her and threw both her arms round my neck, and I held her tightly in my arms.

But she quickly freed herself and went in confusion to the window to cool her hot cheeks in the evening air. 'Ah!' I cried, 'my heart is ready to burst with happiness, but I cannot understand it all, it still seems to me a dream!' 'And to me,' said the lovely lady. 'Last summer,' she added after a while, 'when I came from Rome with the Countess, when we had found the lady Flora happily and brought her back with us—but heard nowhere any news of you—I did not think that it would turn out like this! Not till to-day did the postilion, the dear, quick boy, arrive breathless to tell us that you were coming by the mail-boat.' Then she laughed quietly to herself. 'Do you remember, she asked, 'the last time you saw me, on the balcony?' That was just such a lovely evening as this, with music in the garden.' 'Who is really dead?' I asked hastily. 'Dead?' said the lovely one, and looked at me in astonish-

ment. 'Your ladyship's husband,' I replied, 'who was with you on the balcony then.' She grew very red. 'What extraordinary ideas you have in your head,' she cried, 'that was the Countess's son just returned from his travels, and as it was my birthday he led me out on to the balcony that I might also receive a greeting. But I suppose that is why you ran away, then?' 'Ah, my God, yes!' I cried and clapped my hands to my head. But she just shook her head and laughed merrily.

I was so happy to have her beside me talking so merrily and intimately, I could have listened till dawn. I drew a handful of almonds which I had brought from Italy out of my pocket. She took some and we cracked them and looked happily out across the quiet countryside. 'Do you see,' she said after a while, 'that little white castle over there, gleaming in the moonlight? The Count has given that to us, with its garden and vineyards. We shall live there. He has known for a long time that we are fond of one another, and he has a great affection for you, because if you had not been there when he eloped with the young lady, they would both have been caught before he had made his peace with the Countess, and then everything would have been different.' 'Dear God, most beautiful Countess,' I cried, 'I don't know whether I am on my head or my heels for sheer, unexpected news; it was Leonard then?' 'Yes, yes,' she replied, cutting me short, 'at least that is what he called himself in Italy; the estates over there belong to him, and now he is coming to marry

the lovely Flora, the daughter of our Countess. But why do you always call me Countess?" I stared at her. "I am no countess," she went on. "our kind lady took me into the castle when my uncle, the porter, brought me here, a tiny child and poor orphan."

A great load fell from my heart at these words. "God bless the porter," I cried, quite enchanted, "that he is our uncle! I have always had a great opinion of him." "He means well by you," she replied, "if only you were a little more genteel, he always says. You must dress more elegantly now." "Oh," I cried joyfully, "Morning coat, straw hat, riding-breeches, and spurs! And directly after the wedding we will go off to Italy, to Rome, where the finest fountains play, and we will take the students and the porter with us!" She laughed quietly and looked at me with so much happiness and kindliness, and the music still sounded in the distance and fireworks went up from the castle over the quiet garden and the sound of the rushing Danube rose to us—and everything was so right!

# THE JEWS' BEECH-TREE

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ANNETTE VON DROSTE-HULSHOFF

(1797-1848)

## THE JEWS' BEECH-TREE

FREDERICK MERGEL, born in 1738, was the son of a so-called landowner of the lower class in the village of B., a village which, badly built and smoky though it might be, yet attracted the attention of all travellers by the extremely picturesque beauty of its situation in a green and wooded valley of an important and historically famous mountain range. The province to which it belonged was in those days one of those secluded corners of the globe, without factories or trade, without highways, where a strange face still caused a sensation, and to travel thirty miles, even for the people of position, was a matter which raised them to the rank of Ulysses—in short, a spot like so many others in Germany with the failings and virtues, the originality and narrowness which thrive only in such surroundings.

Owing to very simple and often inadequate laws, the ideas of the inhabitants about right and wrong had got into disorder, or rather, a second system of laws had grown up—the law of public opinion, of custom firmly established by time. The landowners, who were responsible for the dispensing of justice, punished and rewarded according to their own ideas, which were in most cases honest: the people did what seemed to them practicable, and, stretching the point a little, pleased them; and only the loser sometimes thought of turning up old and dusty

documents. It is difficult to look at that period impartially; since it disappeared it has been either arrogantly censured or stupidly praised, for those who lived in it are dazzled by precious memories, and the later-born do not understand it. But this at least can be asserted: that habit was weaker, integrity firmer, wrong-doing more frequent, unscrupulousness rarer. For he who acts according to his convictions, however faulty they may be, can never be quite lost, but nothing is more soul-destroying than having to obey laws which one feels in one's heart to be wrong.

A race of people more restless and adventurous than their neighbours was the reason why many things in the little province of which we are speaking appeared in more glaring colours than in other places under the same circumstances. Crimes were daily committed in the forest, and he who got a broken head in the fighting which constantly occurred had to see to the binding up of it himself. But as most of the wealth of the province consisted in the large and productive forests, these were naturally sharply guarded; not so much in a lawful manner as by constantly renewed attempts to overcome violence and cunning by the same weapons.

The village of B. was considered the most arrogant, cunning, and audacious village in the whole principality. Its position amidst the deep and lofty loneliness of the forest began early to nourish the inborn obstinacy of the people. The proximity of a river which flowed into the sea, and was large enough to bear decked boats which could carry the timber for ship-building



safely and easily out of the country, was to a great extent responsible for encouraging the natural audacity of the people, and the fact that the whole neighbourhood teemed with forest-rangers only acted as an incentive, as the frequent clashes between rangers and peasants generally ended in a victory for the peasants. Thirty, forty wagons would drive out at the same time on a fine moonlight night, with twice as many men of all ages, from half-grown boys to the seventy-year-old mayor, who led the company with the same proud consciousness with which he took his seat in the court room. Those who remained behind heard with indifference the gradually lessening noise of the wheels in the defiles, and went off to sleep again. An occasional shot, a feeble scream would sometimes cause a young wife or sweetheart to start up in alarm; but nobody else took any notice of it. At the earliest sign of dawn the company returned as silently as they had gone out, their faces glowing like bronze, here and there a head bound up, but of that no notice was taken; and a few hours later the whole neighbourhood knew of the ill luck of one or more rangers, carried out of the wood, beaten, blinded with snuff, and incapable for a time of doing their work.

In this district Frederick Mergel was born, in a house which, in the proud possession of a chimney and a few panes of glass in the window, showed the pretensions of its builder, and in its present decayed state showed the miserable circumstances of its present owner. What had been a railing round courtyard and garden had

become a neglected fence, the roof was ruinous, other people's cattle were pastured on the meadow, other people's corn grew in the field beyond the courtyard, and in the garden, with the exception of a few woody rose-bushes left over from better times, more weeds grew than flowers. True, ill luck had been to a certain extent the cause of all this; but there had been also a great deal of lack of organization and bad management. Frederick's father, old Hermann Mergel, had as a bachelor been a so-called good drinker, that is, one who drank himself into the gutter on Sundays and holidays, and behaved himself well on other days. So he found no obstacles put in the way of his courtship of a pretty and well-to-do girl. The wedding was a merry one. Mergel was not too drunk, and the bride's parents went happily home that evening; but on the following Sunday the young wife, covered with blood, was seen to run screaming through the village to her old home, leaving behind her all her good clothes and new belongings. That caused great scandal and annoyance to Mergel, who needed comfort more than ever. By the afternoon no pane of glass in his windows remained intact, and late that night he was still lying across his doorstep, at intervals trying to lift a broken bottle to his lips, and cutting hands and face miserably in the attempt. His young wife stayed with her parents and very soon pined away and died. Whether it was remorse or shame by which Mergel was now overcome, it remains certain that from that time on he was looked upon as completely demoralized.

The household went to pieces, the maids caused trouble and scandal: and so the years passed. Mergel remained a taciturn and at last rather poor widower, until he suddenly let it be known that he was about to marry again. The fact itself was unexpected, but the personality of the bride made it an even greater wonder. Margaret Semmler was an honest, respectable, middle-aged person, who had been in her youth a village beauty. She was still a clever and capable housewife and not penniless; so that nobody could understand what made her contemplate such a step. Probably her reason can be found in her shrewd and conscious self-sufficiency. It is reported that on the evening before the wedding she said: 'A wife who allows her husband to ill-treat her is either stupid or not worth much: if I have a bad time you can say the fault is mine.' The result unfortunately showed that she had over-estimated her power. At first she made a great impression on her husband; when he had had too much to drink he either kept away from the house or crept up to the loft, but after a while the yoke became too irksome, and he was soon seen to reel across the lane into the house, and from inside came the sound of his wild uproar while Margaret hastily closed doors and windows. On one such occasion—this time not a Sunday—she was seen to rush out of doors without cap or neckerchief, her hair hanging wildly round her head, and throw herself down beside a bed of herbs, where she began to grub up the earth with her hands; then glancing anxiously around her she picked

a bunch of herbs and returned slowly towards the house, but went into the loft instead of the house. The rumour spread that on that day Mergel first hit her, but no word of that ever passed her lips. The second year of this unhappy marriage was marked, one cannot say gladdened, by the birth of a son, for Margaret cried bitterly when the child was handed to her. But in spite of all the sorrows of his mother, Frederick was a healthy, pretty child, and throve in the good air. The father loved him very much, and never came home without bringing him a bit of cake, or something of that sort, and people even thought he had improved since the birth of his child; at least the noise in the house was much less.

Frederick was nine years old. It was the feast of the Epiphany, a raw, stormy winter night. Hermann Mergel had gone to a wedding, and had started off betimes as the bride's house was three-quarters of a mile away. Although he had promised to return in the evening, Frau Mergel did not expect him, more especially as a heavy snowfall had begun at sunset. Towards ten o'clock she raked together the ashes in the fire-place and prepared for bed. Frederick stood beside her, already half undressed, listening to the howl of the wind and the rattling of the garret window.

'Mother, isn't father coming to-night?' he asked.

'No, child, to-morrow'. 'But why not, mother? he promised to.' 'Ah, God, if only he would do what he promised! Now get on, and finish undressing.'

They were hardly in bed when a gust of wind came which threatened to carry away the house. The bed shook, and there was a rustling as of goblins in the chimney. 'Mother, somebody is knocking.' 'Quiet, Fritz, that is only the wind shaking that loose board in the gable.' 'No, mother, at the door!' 'It isn't shut; the latch is broken. Go to sleep, don't make me lose the miserable bit of rest I can get.' 'But if father comes?' The mother turned angrily in bed. 'The devil will keep him fast enough!' 'Where is the devil, mother?' 'You wait, fidget! he is standing outside the door, and will fetch you, if you aren't quiet.'

Frederick was quiet; he listened for a little while longer and then fell asleep. After a few hours he woke again. The wind had shifted and was now hissing like a snake through the cracks in the window into his ear. His shoulder was stiff; he crept deeper under the quilt and lay quite still with fright. After a time he noticed that his mother was not sleeping either. He heard her crying, and in between, 'Ave Maria!' and 'Pray for us poor sinners!' The beads of the rosary touched his face. An involuntary sigh escaped him. 'Frederick, are you awake?' 'Yes, mother.' 'Child, pray a little—you know part of the Lord's Prayer—that God may protect us from danger by water and fire.'

Frederick thought about the devil and wondered what he looked like. The multifarious noises and uproars in the house seemed strange to him. He thought there must be something alive both inside and out. 'Listen, mother, I am

sure there are people knocking.' 'Ah, no, child, but there is not one of the old boards in the house which is not clattering.' 'Listen, can't you hear? Some one called! do listen!'

The mother raised herself in bed; the howl of the storm lessened for an instant. One could distinctly hear knocking on the shutters, and voices, 'Margaret, Mistress Margaret, hullo, open the door!' Margaret uttered a loud cry: 'They are bringing that swine again.'

The rosary fell to the floor, clothes were hastily thrown on. She went over to the hearth, and shortly afterwards Frederick heard her crossing the floor with defiant step. Margaret did not come back, but there was a great deal of murmuring of strange voices in the kitchen. Twice a strange man entered the bedchamber and appeared to be looking anxiously for something. Suddenly a lamp was brought in and two men came in leading Margaret. She was white as chalk and her eyes were closed. Frederick thought she must be dead; he began to scream fearfully, whereupon somebody gave him a box on the ears which quietened him, and little by little he began to understand from the talk of the people round him that his uncle Franz Semmler and Hülsmeier had found his father lying dead in the woods and that he now lay in the kitchen.

As soon as Margaret regained consciousness she was anxious to get rid of the strangers. Her brother stayed with her, and Frederick, obliged to stay in bed under threat of punishment, heard all night long the crackling of the kitchen fire

and a noise as of things being pushed backwards and forwards and brushed. Little was said, and that very quietly, but at times sighs reached the boy that, young as he was, cut him to the quick. Once he heard his uncle say, 'Margaret, don't take that so much to heart; we will both have three masses said, and at Easter we will go on pilgrimage to the Virgin at Werl.'

When the corpse was carried out two days later Margaret sat by the hearth, hiding her face in her apron. After a few minutes, when it was all quiet, she murmured to herself, 'Ten years, ten crosses. We have carried them together, and now I am alone!' Then louder: 'Fritz, come here!'

Frederick approached her timidly; with her black ribbons and troubled looks his mother seemed to him a sinister figure. 'Fritz,' she said, 'will you be a good boy, and make me happy, or are you going to be naughty, a liar, a drunkard, and a thief?' 'Mother, Hülsmeier steals.' 'Hülsmeier? nonsense! who told you such a wicked story?' 'He thrashed Aaron the other day, and took six groschen from him.' 'If he took the money from Aaron, you may be sure the accursed Jew had swindled him of it before. Hülsmeier is a decent, proper man, and the Jews are all rogues.' 'But mother, Brandes said he stole wood and venison as well.' 'Child, Brandes is a ranger.' 'Mother, are rangers liars?'

Margaret was silent awhile, then she said, 'Listen, Fritz, the Almighty lets the trees grow wild, and the deer move from one estate to another; they cannot belong to anybody. But

you don't understand that yet; now go to the outhouse and fetch some twigs.'

Frederick had seen his father lying blue and horrible on the straw. But he never said anything about it and apparently did not like to think of it. The memory of his father had left in him a mixture of terror and tenderness, and as nothing binds so much as love and care for a being against whom all others seem to have hardened their hearts, so with Frederick this feeling grew with the years, increased by the feeling of the neglect on the part of others. As long as he was a child he was very unhappy if his dead father was spoken of unkindly, and that was a sorrow which the delicacy of the neighbours did not spare him. In that district it is believed that a person who dies by an accident cannot rest in his grave. Old Mergel became the Breder Wood ghost; he led drunkards like a Jack-o'-lantern till they fell into the ditch; the shepherd boys, when they crouched over the fire at night and the owls called around them, heard a voice saying in broken tones but quite clearly, 'Now hearken, fine Lizzie,' and an unauthorized wood-cutter who had fallen asleep under a spreading oak and been overtaken by darkness, had on waking seen old Mergel's swollen, blue face watching him through the branches. Frederick had to hear a great many such stories from the other boys; and he cried, struck out with his fists and once even with a knife, and in return was pitiably thrashed. After that he always drove his mother's cows alone to the further end of the valley, where he would lie in



the same position in the grass for hours, plucking handfuls of thyme out of the ground.

He was twelve years old when a younger brother of his mother, who had not crossed her doorstep since she had married so foolishly, came on a visit from his home in Breder.

Simon Semmler was a restless little man, with fish-like eyes, and in fact his whole face was like a pike's, a gloomy person, in whom bragging taciturnity and affected sincerity were equally mixed; who would like to have been thought an enlightened person, but who was really considered a disagreeable, quarrelsome fellow, out of whose way everybody was glad to keep as he got older, for with age dull people generally increase their demands as their usefulness decreases.

Nevertheless poor Margaret was glad to see him, for he was now her only living relative.

'Simon, is it you?' she asked, and trembled so much that she had to hold on to her chair. 'Have you come to see how I am getting on, and my dirty boy?' Simon looked at her earnestly and then gave her his hand: 'You have grown old, Margaret!' Margaret sighed. 'Fate has often been cruel to me.' 'Yes, girl, a late marriage is always regretted! Now you are old, and the child still small. There is a time for everything. But when an old house catches fire, no water is any use.' A flame, blood-red, spread over Margaret's care-worn face.

'But I hear that your boy is a knowing little chap and very bright,' went on Simon. 'Well, more or less, and yet honest.' 'Hm, once somebody stole a cow, and his name was Honest also.

But he is quiet and thoughtful, isn't he? and does not run about with the other boys?' 'He is a strange child,' said Margaret as though to herself, 'and that is not good.' Simon laughed aloud: 'Your boy is scared because the others have several times given him a good thrashing. He'll return that to them yet. Hülsmeier came to see me a short time ago, and he said the boy was like a deer.'

What mother's heart does not rejoice when she hears her child praised? Margaret had never felt so pleased, for every one said her boy was spiteful and taciturn. Tears came into her eyes. 'Yes, God be praised, he has straight limbs.' 'What does he look like?' continued Simon. 'He has a great deal from you, Simon, a great deal.' Simon laughed. 'Ho, he must be a fine fellow, I grow handsomer every day. They say he is not doing much at school. You let him herd the cows? That's just as well. Only half of what the master says is true. But where does he go with the cows? Telengrund? Koderholz? Teutoburger Wald? by night and day?' 'The whole night through: but why do you ask that?'

Simon appeared not to have heard this last question; he put his head out of the door. 'Ha, here comes the fellow! His father's son! he swings his arm just as your husband did. And just look, actually the boy has my fair hair!'

A stealthy, proud smile crossed the mother's face: her Frederick's blond curls and Simon's red bristles! Without answering she broke a twig from the hedge and went to meet her son, apparently to help him with a lazy cow, but

really to whisper a few quick, half-threatening words to him; for she knew his stubborn nature, and Simon's manner seemed to her to-day more intimidating than ever. But everything went off better than she expected; Frederick was neither stubborn nor cheeky, but rather somewhat foolish and very anxious to please his uncle. So it came about that after half an hour's talk Simon put forward the suggestion of adopting the boy, whom he did not want to take right away from his mother, but whom he wanted to have with him for a great part of the time, and whom in the end he would make his heir, which he would be in any case. Margaret allowed him to explain how great the advantage and how small the renunciation would be. She knew better what a loss to a sickly widow a twelve-year-old son whom she had brought up almost to take the place of a daughter could be. But she was silent and agreed to everything. Only she begged her brother to be strict, but not hard with the boy.

'He is a good boy,' she said, 'but I am a solitary woman; my son is not like one who has been ruled by a father's hand.' Simon nodded his head slyly: 'You leave that to me, we shall get on quite well together, and do you know what? let the boy come with me now. I have to fetch two sacks from the mill; the smaller will be just the right size for him, and like that he will learn to help me. Come along, Fritz, put on your wooden shoes.' And soon Margaret was watching them striding away, Simon in front, his head well forward, and the tails of his red coat waving like flames behind him. He had almost the look

of a fiery man atoning for the theft of sacks; Frederick followed him, straight and tall for his age, with fine, almost noble features, and long fair hair which was in better order than was to be expected from the rest of his appearance, otherwise ragged, sunburnt, and with a sort of raw melancholy in his looks. But a certain family likeness was not to be denied, and as Frederick slowly followed his guide, his gaze fixed firmly upon the man whose strange appearance attracted him, one had instinctively to think of some one watching with troubled attention his own future picture in a magic mirror.

Now the two neared that part of the Teutoburger Wood where Breder Wood comes down the sides of the hill and makes a very dark patch. So far very little had been said. Simon seemed meditative, the boy absent-minded, and both were panting under the weight of their sacks. Suddenly Simon asked: 'Do you like brandy?' The child did not answer. 'I asked you if you like brandy? does your mother sometimes give you some to drink?' 'Mother has none herself,' said Frederick. 'Ah, so much the better!—do you know this wood in front of us?' 'That is Breder Wood.' 'And do you know what happened in there?' Frederick remained silent. In the meantime they drew nearer to the gloomy ravine.

'Does your mother still pray so much?' went on Simon. 'Yes, every evening, two rosaries.' 'Oh! and you pray with her?' The boy laughed, half embarrassed, but with a sly look sideways. 'Mother says one rosary before supper, and I am

not home with the cows then, and the other in bed, and then I am asleep.' 'Oh, ho, comrade!' These last few words were said under the shade of a wide-spreading beech-tree which overhung the entrance to the ravine. By this time it was quite dark; the moon was in its first quarter, but its feeble light only served to give a strange appearance to those things which it reached through an occasional thinning of the trees. Frederick kept close behind his uncle; his uncle walked quickly, and if anybody had been there to look at him, they would have noticed an expression of extreme, but strange rather than fearful, attention. So the two marched vigorously forwards, Simon with the firm tread of an experienced walker, Frederick unsteadily and as though in a dream. It seemed to him that everything moved in the separate moon-beams, and the trees swayed, first together and then apart. His steps were made unsteady by the roots of trees and slippery places where the ground was damp; once or twice he nearly fell. At last the darkness seemed less, and the two entered a fairly large clearing. Here the moon shone clear and showed that but a short while earlier the axe had been used unmercifully. Everywhere stood stumps, many several feet high, just as they had been most convenient to cut. The proscribed work must have been interrupted, for a beech-tree in full leaf lay right across the path, its branches stretching high above it and its leaves moving gently in the night wind. Simon stopped for a moment and looked attentively at the fallen tree. In the middle of the

clearing stood an old oak, broader than it was tall; a pale ray of light which fell through the branches upon its trunk showed that it was hollow, a fact which had probably saved it from the general disturbance. Here Simon suddenly gripped the boy's hand.

'Frederick, do you know that tree? That is the broad oak.' Frederick shuddered and clung tightly to his uncle's hand. 'Look,' went on Simon, 'this is where your uncle Franz and Hülsmeyer found your father, when quite drunken, and without penance or extreme unction he went to the devil.' 'Uncle, uncle,' panted Frederick. 'You aren't afraid? You devil of a boy, you are pinching my arm, let me go!' He tried to shake off the boy, 'Your father was a good sort, anyway; God won't be so particular. I loved him as though he were my own brother.' Frederick loosed his grip of his uncle's arm; both went on silently until the rest of the wood was behind them and they came in sight of the village of Breder with its mud huts and the few better houses, Simon's amongst them, of bricks.

The next evening Margaret sat for an hour in front of her house and waited for her boy. It had been the first night the boy had ever spent away from her, and still Frederick did not come. She was annoyed and anxious, yet knew that she had no grounds to be either. The clock in the church tower struck seven, and the cattle returned home; he was still not there, and she had to get up and look after her cows.

When she returned to the dark kitchen Frederick was standing on the hearth; he was

bending down and warming his hands at the flames. The firelight played over his features and gave him an unpleasant look of thinness and nervous twitching. Margaret stopped short in the doorway her child looked so strangely altered.

'Frederick, how is your uncle?' The boy murmured a few unintelligible words, and pressed closer to the wall. 'Frederick, have you lost your tongue? Child, say something, you know quite well that I don't hear well with the right ear.' The child raised his voice and began to stammer so badly that Margaret could not understand anything.

'What is that you say? a greeting from Master Semmler? back again? where? the cows are already home. Wretched boy, I can't understand you. Wait, let me see if you still have a tongue in your mouth!' She moved a few steps nearer him. The child looked up at her with the sad eyes of a half-grown dog learning tricks, and in his terror began to stamp his feet and rub his back against the wall.

Margaret stood still, her look grew anxious. The boy appeared to her to have fallen together, even his clothes were not the same, no, that was not her child! and yet—'Frederick, Frederick!' she called.

In the bedroom a cupboard door banged, and the boy she called stepped forward, in one hand a so-called wooden violin, that is an old wooden shoe spanned with three or four old violin-strings, in the other a bow worthy of his instrument. He went straight up to his wretched

double with an air of conscious dignity and independence that showed up the difference between the two otherwise amazingly similar boys.

'There, John,' he said, and with a patronizing expression gave him the work of art; 'there is the violin I promised you. My playtime is over, I must earn money now.' John threw another shy glance at Margaret, then slowly stretched out his hand until he held the proffered gift tight, and hid it under his wretched jacket.

Margaret stood quite still and let the children alone. Her thoughts had taken another, a very serious turn, and she looked uneasily from one to the other. The strange boy had turned back and was bending again over the fire with an expression of momentary comfort which bordered on simplicity. In Frederick's face the play of expression changed continually, but self-seeking was more obvious than kindness, and his eye in its almost glassy clearness certainly showed for the first time that expression of unbridled ambition and propensity to braggadocio, which appeared later as so strong a motive in most of his dealings.

His mother's voice roused him from thoughts which were as new as they were pleasant.

She was sitting at her spinning-wheel again.

'Frederick,' she said hesitatingly, 'tell me—' and stopped. Frederick looked up, and as she said no more, turned back to his protégé. 'No, listen,' and then more quietly: 'what boy is that? what is his name?' Frederick answered equally quietly; 'That is uncle's pigherd, who has a message for Hülsmeier. Uncle has given me a



pair of shoes and a drill vest, and the boy carried them here for me, that is why I promised him the violin; he is only a poor boy; he is called John.' 'Well?' said Margaret. 'What do you want, mother?' 'What else is he called?' 'Yes, oh, nothing else—or, wait—yes: Nobody, John Nobody. He has no father,' he added more quietly.

Margaret rose and went into the bedroom. When she came back after a short time her face wore a hard, morose expression. 'Now Frederick,' she said, 'let the boy go on his errand. Boy, what are you putting into the ashes? have you nothing to do at home?'

The boy pulled himself together so hastily that his limbs got in the way, and his wood violin was within a hair's breadth of falling into the fire.

'Wait, John,' said Frederick proudly; 'I will give you half my slice of bread and butter: it is too much for me, mother always cuts right across the loaf.'

'Don't,' said Margaret; 'he is going home.'

'Yes, but he won't get anything there; Uncle Simon eats at seven o'clock.' Margaret turned to the boy: 'Won't somebody keep something for you? Tell me, who looks after you?' 'Nobody,' stammered the child. 'Nobody?' she echoed, 'there, take it, take it!' she added hastily; you are called Nobody, and nobody looks after you! That is a shame! And now go! Frederick, don't go with him, do you hear? don't go together through the village.' 'I am only going to get wood from the shed,' answered Frederick. When both boys had gone, Margaret threw herself

down on a chair and beat her hands together with an expression of the deepest misery. Her face was white as a cloth. 'A broken oath, a broken oath!' she groaned. 'Simon, Simon, how will you face your God?'

She sat for a while, motionless with tightly pressed lips, as though completely absent in mind. Frederick stood in front of her and had already spoken twice to her. 'What is it? what do you want?' she cried starting up. 'I have brought you money,' he said, more astonished than frightened. 'Money, where?' she moved and the small coins fell with a clink to the floor. Frederick picked them up. 'Money from Uncle Simon, because I have helped him with some work. I can earn money for myself now.' 'Money from Simon? throw it away, away! no, give it to the poor. But no, keep it,' she whispered almost inaudibly; 'we are poor ourselves, who knows if we shall manage without begging?'

'I am to go to uncle again on Monday and help him with the sowing.' 'You go again to him? no, no, never again.' She threw her arms passionately round her child. 'Yes,' she added, a stream of tears pouring down her hollow cheeks, 'go, he is my only brother, and the shame is great! But remember God, and do not forget your daily prayer!'

Margaret laid her face against the wall, and wept aloud. She had had many heavy burdens to bear, her husband's wicked treatment, still heavier his death, and it had been a bitter hour when she had had to give over the last piece of ground to a creditor as usufruct, and her plough

stood idle before her door. But never before had she felt like this; yet, after she had wept throughout the whole evening, and lain awake a whole night, she decided that her brother Simon could not be so wicked, the child could not be his, resemblance meant nothing. She herself, forty years earlier, had lost a little sister who had looked exactly like the strange pedlar. What things one believed when one had so little, and through unbelief was likely to lose that little!

From that time on Frederick was rarely at home. All the warmer feelings of which Simon was capable he seemed to expend on his nephew; at least he missed him very much, and was always sending messages, when any domestic matter kept the boy too long with his mother. The boy was completely changed; the dreaminess had quite gone, he grew more decided, began to pay attention to his appearance, and soon became known as a handsome, active youth. His uncle, who had always some new projects on hand, undertook amongst other things important public works, for example, road building, in which Frederick was reckoned his best workman, and in everything his right hand; for though he was not yet fully developed, there were few who could compete with him in endurance. Margaret had till yet only loved her son, now she began to be proud of him, and even to feel a sort of esteem for him, as she watched the youth developing without any assistance from her, even without her advice, which she, like most people, considered priceless, and she

therefore could not rate high enough the talent which was able to manage without it.

In his eighteenth year Frederick had already won a considerable name for himself amongst the youth of the village as the result of a bet by the terms of which he carried on his back for two miles without putting it down a wild boar which he had killed. In the meantime participation in the glory which he won was the only advantage which came to Margaret from these propitious circumstances, for Frederick spent more and more on his appearance, and at last began to find it hard to bear when, owing to want of money, he had to play second fiddle to any other of the village youths. Added to that all his energy was given over to outside gains: at home, quite in contrast to his previous reputation, every continuous occupation seemed troublesome to him, he preferred to undertake a difficult but short job, which soon allowed him to go back to his earlier post as cowherd. But this was an unsuitable occupation for his age, and drew a great deal of ridicule upon him; ridicule which he soon silenced by a few sharp reprimands with his fist. So one was soon accustomed to seeing him first decked out and happy as the young elegant and leader of the village youth; then as a ragged cowherd, solitary and dreamy, slinking along behind the cows, or lying face downwards in a clearing in the woods, apparently quite aimlessly stripping the moss off the tree-trunks.

About this time the sleepy laws were to a certain extent shaken up by a band of forest trespassers who, under the name of the Blue

Blouses, so far outdid their predecessors in cunning and insolence that it was too much for even the most long-suffering. Quite contrary to the usual state of affairs, when it was easy to point out the leaders of the business, it was now impossible, in spite of the greatest vigilance, to discover one single individual. They took their name from the identical dress which they wore to make it more difficult for them to be recognized in case a ranger should catch sight of one of them disappearing into the undergrowth. They ravaged everything like the palmer worm; whole stretches of forest would be felled in a night and carried away, so that the next morning nothing was there but chips and untidy heaps of the top wood; and the fact that the cart-tracks never led to a village, but always to the river and back again, showed that they were working under the protection, and probably with the aid, of the shipowners. The band must have had very clever spies, for the rangers might watch in vain for weeks; but in that night, no matter whether stormy or bright moonlight, when they gave up in need of rest, the destruction began again. The strange thing was that the people in the neighbourhood seemed to know as little about it as the rangers themselves.

It could be said with certainty of some villages that they did not belong to the Blue Blouses, but no village could be seriously suspected since the most suspicious of them all, the village of B., was cleared. A coincidence was responsible for this, a wedding, at which the whole village had caroused through the night, while at the same

time the Blue Blouzes had carried out one of their most notable expeditions.

The damage in the forests was becoming so great that the measures taken against it were increased to a hitherto unknown rigour; the forests were patrolled day and night, farm servants and men servants were armed and detailed to help the rangers. But the result was slight, and the watchers had often hardly left one end of the forest when the Blue Blouzes entered at the other. This state of things lasted more than a year, watchers and thieves, thieves and watchers, like sun and moon, alternately in possession of the ground and never meeting.

It was in July 1756, at 3 o'clock in the morning: the moon was high in the heavens, but its brightness was beginning to wane, and a narrow yellow stripe was already showing in the east, edging the horizon and closing the entrance to a ravine like a golden band. Frederick lay in the grass, in his usual position, carving a willow stick whose knotty end he was trying to shape into an animal. He looked overtired, yawned, and sometimes rested his head against a weathered tree-stump, while his eyes, dustier than the horizon, strayed over the young growth which nearly hid the entrance to the place where he lay. Once or twice his eyes brightened and took their characteristic glassy expression, but he immediately shut them again, and yawned and stretched himself in the manner of lazy cowherds. His dog lay a short distance from him close to the cows, which, untroubled by the forest rules, were browsing as much on the young green of the

trees as on the grass, and blowing contentedly in the fresh morning air.

From time to time a dull, crashing noise came from the woods; the sound, which recurred at intervals of five to eight minutes, lasted but a moment and was followed by a long echo from the hill-sides. Frederick took no notice of it; only occasionally, when the noise was particularly loud or continuous, he raised his head and his gaze wandered slowly over the different paths which led into the clearing.

It was already getting light; the birds began to twitter and the dew to rise from the ground. Frederick had slipped down from his tree-stump and was lying, his arms folded above his head, staring into the softly increasing morning light. Suddenly he started up; something passed over his face like a flash; he listened for a few seconds, his body bent forward like a hunting dog on the scent. Then he hastily put two fingers into his mouth and whistled shrilly and continuously. 'Fidel, you miserable creature!' He threw a stone and hit the flanks of the quiet dog, which, wakened from sleep, first snapped round, then howling, went to seek comfort from the spot whence the evil had come.

At that moment the branches of a near-by thicket were parted almost noiselessly and there stepped out a man in a green coat with a silver escutcheon on the sleeve, carrying his gun cocked. His eyes wandered quickly over the clearing and then rested with particular keenness on the boy. He stepped forward, made a sign towards the thicket, and gradually seven or eight men

appeared all wearing similar uniform, hunting-knives in their belts and their guns cocked.

'Frederick, what was that?' said the first. 'I wanted the wretched animal to obey at once. For all he cares the cows can graze the ears off my head.' 'The beast saw us,' said another.

'To-morrow you'll go a journey with a stone tied round your neck,' went on Frederick, and threw another stone at the dog. 'Frederick, don't pretend to be so big a fool! you know me, and you understand me as well.' A look which worked at once accompanied these words. 'Herr Brandes, think of my mother!' 'That is what I am doing. Haven't you heard anything in the woods?' 'In the woods?' The boy cast a rapid glance at the ranger's face. 'Your wood-cutters, but nothing else.' 'My wood-cutters!'

The ranger's already dark complexion became darker yet. 'How many of them are there, and where are they working?' 'Where you sent them; I don't know.' Brandes turned to his companions. 'Go on, I will follow you.'

When they had all disappeared one after the other into the undergrowth, Brandes went close to the boy: 'Frederick,' he said in a tone of repressed fury, 'my patience is at an end; I would like to beat you like a dog, and you are not worth anything else. You scum, without a tile to your roof. You will soon, praise be to God, have reached beggary, and your mother, the old witch, shan't get even a mouldy crust when she comes begging at my door. But first I'll see you both living in misery.' Frederick clutched convulsively at a branch. He was



deadly pale, and his eyes like balls of crystal seemed to be on the point of shooting out of his head. But only for an instant. Then a complete, almost sleepy peace came over him again. 'Sir,' he said firmly, with an almost soft tone in his voice, 'you have said something for which you are not responsible, and I perhaps also. Let us wipe it out, and now I will tell you what you want to know. If those wood-cutters are not there by your orders, then it must be the Blue Blouses; for no wagon has come from the village, the path is just in front of me; and there were four wagons. I have not seen them but I heard them driving up the ravine.' He hesitated a moment.

'Can you say that I ever cut down a tree in your district? that I ever felled any tree anywhere except by order? Think whether you can.'

An embarrassed murmur was the only answer of the ranger, who, like most rough men, easily repented. He turned brusquely away and strode towards the bushes. 'No, sir,' cried Frederick, 'if you want to join the other rangers, they went up there past the beech-tree.' 'By the beech?' said Brandes doubtfully, 'no, over there towards Mester Wood.' 'I tell you, by the beech; the strap of Henry's gun got hung up on that crooked branch; I saw it.'

The ranger took the path which had been pointed out to him.

All this time Frederick had not altered his position; half lying, his arm flung round a withered branch, he watched unmoved, as the ranger glided, with the careful stride of his

calling, as noiselessly as a lynx entering a hen-roost, through the bushes which almost overgrew the footpath. Here a branch fell to behind him, there another; the outline of his figure disappeared little by little. There was a flash through the leaves. It was a button on his coat; at last he was gone. During this gradual disappearance, Frederick's face lost its expression of unconcern and grew agitated. Did he perhaps regret not having bound the ranger to silence regarding what he had told him? He moved a few steps forward, then stopped. 'It is too late,' he murmured, and picked up his hat. There was a slight noise in the thicket not twenty paces from him; it was the ranger sharpening his flint. Frederick listened. 'No,' he said at last decisively, and collecting his things together began to drive his cattle hastily down the ravine.

At midday Margaret sat by the fire and made tea. Frederick had come home ill, he complained of severe headache, and in reply to her anxious inquiries had told how the ranger had annoyed him, had in fact related the whole of the foregoing affair with the exception of one small item which he found it better to keep to himself. Margaret looked silently and sadly into the fire, and then at the water. She was used to hearing her son complain, but to-day he seemed more exhausted than ever before. Was he going to be ill? She sighed deeply and dropped the log of wood which she had just picked up.

'Mother,' called Frederick from the bedroom. 'What do you want?' 'Was that a shot?' 'Ah, no, I don't know what you mean.' 'It must be

the throbbing in my head,' he replied. A neighbour came in and related some insignificant gossip to which Margaret listened unmoved. Then she went.

'Mother,' called Frederick. Margaret went to him. 'What was she talking about?' 'Oh, nothing, lies, gossip!' Frederick raised himself on his elbow. 'About Grete Siemers: you know that old story; and there is nothing in it.' Frederick lay down again. 'I will try to sleep,' he said.

Margaret sat by the fire; she was spinning, and her thoughts were not pleasant. In the village a clock struck half past twelve; the door opened and the magistrate's clerk came in.

'Good day, Frau Mergel,' he said; 'can you give me a drink of milk? I have just come from M.' When Frau Mergel brought him what he desired, he asked, 'Where is Frederick?' She was just busy fetching a plate, and missed his question. He drank slowly and in short gulps. 'Do you know,' he said at last, 'that the Blue Blouses have laid a stretch of wood as bare as my hand again to-night?' 'Oh, dear, dear!' she said unconcernedly. 'The rascals ruin everything,' went on the clerk; 'if only they spared the young trees; but oak saplings not as thick as my arm, not even large enough for a rudder post! It seems as though they are as anxious to damage things for other people as to make profit for themselves.'

'It is a pity,' said Margaret. The clerk had finished his drink but made no move to go. He seemed to have something on his conscience.

'Haven't you heard anything about Brandes?' he asked suddenly. 'Nothing, he never comes into this house.' 'Then you don't know what has happened to him?' 'No, what?' asked Margaret anxiously. 'He is dead!' 'Dead!' she cried, 'what, dead? In God's name! he passed here only this morning with his gun slung across his back!' 'He is dead,' repeated the clerk, gazing sharply at her, 'killed by the Blue Blouses. A quarter of an hour ago his body was brought back to the village.'

Margaret beat her hands together, 'God in Heaven, do not judge him! he did not know what he did!' 'Him!' cried the clerk, 'the accursed murderer do you mean?' From the bedroom came loud groans. Margaret rushed in and the clerk followed her. Frederick sat upright in bed, his face hidden in his hands, groaning like a dying man. 'Frederick, what is it?' asked his mother. 'What is it?' echoed the clerk. 'Oh my head, my head!' he moaned. 'What is the matter with him?' 'God knows,' she replied, 'he brought the cows home before four o'clock because he felt so ill. Frederick, Frederick, tell me, shall I fetch the doctor?' 'No, no,' he whined, 'it is nothing, it will soon be better.'

He lay back; his face twitched convulsively with pain; then the colour returned to it. 'Go,' he said dully; 'I must sleep, then it will be over.'

'Frau Mergel,' said the clerk earnestly; 'is it certain that Frederick came home at four o'clock and did not go out again?' She stared at him. 'Ask any child in the street. And go out again?—would to God he could!' 'Did he say nothing

about Brandes?' 'Yes, in God's name, that Brandes abused him in the woods, and threw his poverty in his face, the ruffian! But God forgive me, he is dead! Go!' she added angrily, 'have you come to insult honest people? Go!' She turned back to her son, the clerk went. 'Frederick, what does it mean?' she asked, 'did you hear? terrible, terrible, without confession or absolution!'

'Mother, mother, for God's sake let me sleep; I can't bear any more!'

At this moment John Nobody entered the bedroom; thin and tall like a hop-pole, but ragged and frightened just as he had been five years before. His face was even paler than usual. 'Frederick', he said, 'you are to come to uncle at once, he needs you; at once!' Frederick turned to the wall. 'I am not coming,' he said roughly, 'I am ill.' 'But you must come,' croaked John, 'he said I must bring you.'

Frederick laughed scornfully, 'I'd like to see that!' 'Leave him in peace,' said Margaret, 'he cannot, you can see for yourself.' She went out for a few moments; when she returned, Frederick was already dressed. 'What are you thinking of?' she said, 'you cannot, you shall not go.' 'What must be, can be,' he answered, and was already out of the house with John. 'Ah, God,' sighed the mother, 'when our children are young, they trample our laps, when they are older, our hearts!'

The legal inquiry had begun, the deed was clear as daylight; but all signs of the murderer were so slight that, although everything pointed to the Blue Blouses, it was not possible to get

beyond surmise. One clue seemed to give some light, though there were reasons why little notice was taken of it. The absence of the lord of the manor had made it necessary that the magistrate's clerk should begin proceedings himself. He sat at the table; the room was crowded with peasants, some just curious, others from whom it was hoped, failing actual witnesses, to get some information. Cowherds who had been out with their cattle that night, labourers working in near-by fields, they all stood firm and upright, hands in pockets, a silent declaration as it were that they had no intention of interfering.

Eight rangers were examined. Their evidence agreed exactly: Brandes had ordered them to meet him on the evening of the tenth to make a round of inspection, as he had received intelligence that the Blue Blouses would be out; but he had only spoken vaguely about it. At two in the morning they started and had come across many signs of destruction which had angered the head ranger very much; otherwise all was quiet. About four o'clock Brandes said: 'We have been hoaxed, let us go home.' As they turned back along the Bremerberg, and at the same time the wind shifted, they heard distinctly the sound of the axe in Mester Wood, and from the rapidity of the blows realized that the Blue Blouses were at work. They had consulted together whether with so small a number it was advisable to try an attack on the daring band, and then without coming to any decision had moved nearer to the sounds. Then followed the meeting with Frederick. Further: after Brandes

had sent them on without definite orders, they crept forward for a while, and then, as they noticed that the noise, which had come from a great distance, had now ceased completely, they had stopped to wait for their leader. The delay had annoyed them, and after about ten minutes they had moved on to the scene of destruction. All was over, there was no sound in the forest, of twenty felled trees eight were still there, the others had already been removed. They could not understand how this had been managed as there were no signs of cart tracks.

And owing to the dryness of the season and the fact that the ground was covered with pine needles it had been impossible to distinguish any footprints, though the ground all around had been stamped hard. Deciding that it was useless to wait there for their leader, they had hurried to the other side of the wood in the hope of catching some glimpse of the miscreants. Here on the edge of the wood one of them had got entangled in the blackberry-bushes, and looking back to free himself had caught sight of something glittering in the undergrowth; it was the buckle on Brandes's belt, and he himself was lying in the undergrowth, his right hand on the barrel of his gun, the other clenched, and his head split open by the blow of an axe.

Such was the evidence of the rangers; now it was the turn of the peasants. Many asserted that at four o'clock they were busy at home or elsewhere, and they were all settled, trustworthy people. The court had to be satisfied with their negative evidence.

Frederick was called. He was quite unconcerned, and neither anxious nor impudent when he entered. The inquiry lasted a fairly long time, and a number of subtle questions were put to him; but he answered them all openly and precisely; and told of his encounter with the ranger fairly accurately, except the end, which he thought better to keep to himself. His alibi for the time of the murder was easily established.

The ranger had been murdered at the edge of the Mester Wood: more than three-quarters of an hour's walk from the ravine in which he had talked to Frederick at four o'clock, and from which the latter had driven his herd into the village ten minutes later. Everybody had seen this; all the peasants were sure of it and hastened to say so; he had spoken to this one, nodded to that.

The clerk sat there angry and perplexed. Suddenly he put his hand behind him and thrust something glittering before Frederick's eyes. 'To whom does this belong?' Frederick sprang back. 'Oh, God, I thought you were going to smash my skull.' His eyes passed rapidly over the deadly weapon and seemed to hang for a moment on a splintered corner of the handle. 'I do not know,' he said firmly. It was the axe which had been found firmly embedded in the ranger's skull. 'Look at it carefully,' went on the clerk. Frederick took it in his hands, looked at it, turned it over, looked again. 'It is just an axe like any other,' he said then, and laid it unconcernedly on the table. A bloodstain was visible; he appeared to shudder, but he repeated



very definitely, 'I do not know it.' The clerk sighed his displeasure. He knew of nothing more, and he had hoped by surprise to make some discovery. Nothing remained but to close the inquiry.

To those who are perhaps anxious to hear the result of this affair, I can only say that the mystery was never cleared up, though many further inquiries were held. The stir caused by this affair, and the tightening up of the precautions against the forest thieves which followed, seemed to have caused the Blue Blouses to lose their courage; from that time onward they disappeared, and although later many forest thieves were caught, there was never any reason for connecting them with the infamous band. Twenty years later the axe was still lying, a useless *corpus delicti*, in the archives, where it is probably still lying with its spots of rust. In a work of fiction it would not be right to impose thus upon the reader's curiosity. But all this really happened; I can add nothing to it nor take away.

The following Sunday Frederick got up very early to go to confession. It was the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, and the priest was already in the confessional before daybreak.

After he had dressed himself in the dark, he went as noiselessly as possible out of the tiny cubicle which was given up to him in Simon's house.

His prayer-book must be lying on the sill in the kitchen, and he hoped to find it by the help of the weak moonlight; it was not there. He

looked round for it, and shrank back in alarm; in the doorway stood Simon, almost undressed; his thin figure, his dishevelled hair and the ghastly whiteness of his face in the moonlight gave him a horribly changed appearance. 'Is he walking in his sleep?' thought Frederick, and remained motionless. 'Frederick, where are you going?' whispered the old man. 'Uncle, is it you? I am going to confession.' 'I thought so; go, for God's sake, but confess like a good Christian.' 'I will,' said Frederick. 'Think of the ten commandments; thou shalt not bear witness against thy neighbour.' 'False witness.' 'No, none at all, you have been badly taught; he who accuses another in the confessional is unworthy to receive the sacrament.'

Both were silent. 'Uncle, what makes you say that?' asked Frederick at last; 'your conscience is not clear, you have lied to me.' 'I? how?' 'Where is your axe?' 'My axe? In the loft.' 'Have you made a new handle for it? Where is the old one?' 'You can find that by daylight in the wood house.'

'Go,' he added, contemptuously, 'I thought you were a man; but you are just an old woman, who thinks the house is on fire directly the stove smokes. Listen,' he went on, 'if I know more of the affair than this door-post, then may I be for ever accursed. I had been at home a long time,' he added. Frederick stood there anxious and doubting. He would have given much to see his uncle's face, but while they whispered together the sky had become overcast.

'I have been very guilty,' sighed Frederick,

'in sending him the wrong way—though—I did not expect this—no, certainly not. Uncle, I have to thank you for a heavy load on my conscience.' 'Oh, go and confess,' whispered Simon with quaking voice, 'profane the sacrament with tale-bearing, and set poor people a spy on their trail, who will soon find the way to snatch the miserable crusts of bread from their teeth, even though he dares not speak—go!'

Frederick stood undecided: he heard a slight sound; the clouds drifted away, the moonlight fell again on the door of the kitchen: it was shut. That morning Frederick did not go to confession.

The impression which this encounter made on Frederick unfortunately was soon erased. Who doubts that Simon did all he could to guide his adopted son along the path he himself was going? And Frederick had attributes which made this only too easy: thoughtlessness, excitability, and above all an unbounded arrogance that did not always disdain pretence, and then staked all to make that pretence real, in order to avoid being shamed. By nature he was not ignoble, but he accustomed himself to prefer inner shame to outer disgrace. One can only say he got into the habit of showing off while his mother starved.

This unhappy change in his character was the work of several years, during which it was noticeable that Margaret grew more and more silent regarding her son, and sank slowly into a state of such complete demoralization as one would not have thought possible. She became suspicious, careless, even untidy, and many people thought that her head had suffered.

Frederick became noisier and noisier; he never missed any festival or wedding, and as a very touchy sense of honour would not allow him to overlook the secret disapproval of those around him, he was continually prepared not only to bid defiance to public opinion, but also to lead it in the way he thought it should go. He was outwardly tidy, sober, and apparently faithful, but cunning, boastful, and often brutal, a being in whom nobody could take pleasure, least of all his mother, and who yet, owing to his dreaded audacity and still more dreaded malice, had won for himself a certain ascendancy in the village that was the more acknowledged as it grew more obvious that his real capabilities were not known. Only one youth in the village, Wilm Hülsmeier, dared by knowledge of his strength and good circumstances to oppose him; and as he was quicker with his tongue than Frederick, and always knew how to turn defeat into a joke, he was the only one whom Frederick was not very willing to meet.

Four years had passed; it was October; the mild autumn of 1760, which filled every barn with corn and every cellar with wine, had flooded this corner of the earth with its riches also, and there was more drunkenness to be seen and more brawling and foolish pranks to be heard of than ever before. Amusement and pleasure reigned everywhere; holidays came into fashion, and whoever had a few pence to spare, wanted a wife at once, to-day to help him eat, to-morrow to help him starve. There was a hearty wedding in the village, at which the

guests had more to look forward to than an out-of-tune fiddle, a glass of spirits, and the good humour they brought themselves. Everybody had been busy since dawn; in front of every house clothes were hung out to air, and the village looked the whole day like a jumble sale. As many outsiders were expected everybody was anxious to help to uphold the honour of the village.

It was seven o'clock in the evening, and the fun at its height; everywhere rejoicing and laughter, the low rooms full to suffocation with red, blue, and yellow figures, like a pound into which too big a herd has been driven. There was dancing on the threshing-floor, at least, those who had succeeded in getting two feet of room turned round and round on it and tried to make up by shouting what failed in movement. The orchestra was brilliant; the first fiddle, a recognized artist, overpowered the second and a large bass viol with three strings which were seraped *ad libitum* by amateurs; a super-abundance of spirits and coffee; all the guests streaming with sweat; in fact a wonderful fête.

Frederick, in a new blue coat, strutted about like a cock and asserted his rights as a beau. When the gentry arrived he was sitting behind the bass viol and played the deepest note with vigour and much feeling.

'John,' he cried, peremptorily, and his protégé appeared from the dance-floor, where he had been attempting to swing his clumsy legs and shout with the rest. Frederick handed him the bow, gave him to understand his wishes with

a proud movement of the head, and went back to the dance. 'Now, merrily, musicians: Papen van Istrup!' The favourite dance was played, and Frederick leapt about in front of the gentry, so violently that the cows below drew back their horns and raised a noise of rattling chains and loud moos. His fair hair went up and down a head above the others, like a pike turning over and over in the water; all round were heard the shouts of the maidens he desired to honour by thrusting his long fair hair in their face with a quick movement of the head.

'That's enough!' he cried at last, and moved, the sweat dropping from him, over to the side-board; 'hurrah for our good master and all his family, and all the most noble princes and princesses, and who won't drink with me, I'll box his ears till he hears the angels singing!' A loud cheer greeted this gallant toast. Frederick made a bow—'No offence, ladies and gentlemen; we are only ignorant peasants!'

At this moment a tumult arose at the other end of the floor, shrieks, scolding, laughter, all together. 'Butter thief! butter thief!' cried a few children, and there appeared, or rather was pushed forward, John Nobody, his head lowered, doing his utmost to reach the entrance. 'What is it? What are you doing with our John?' cried Frederick peremptorily.

'You'll know that soon enough,' croaked an old woman in a kitchen apron, with a dish-cloth in her hand. Shame! John, the poor creature, who had to put up with the worst of everything at home, had tried to lay in a pound of butter

for the hard times ahead, and forgetting that he had wrapped it into his handkerchief and put it in his pocket, he had gone close to the kitchen fire, and now the fat was running ignominiously down his coat-tails.

General uproar; the maidens sprang aside, afraid of getting greasy, or pushed the delinquent on. Others made way out of pity or prudence. But Frederick stepped forward, 'Scamp!' he cried, and gave his patient protégé several slaps in the face; then he pushed him to the door and gave him a vigorous kick to help him on his way. He came back depressed, his dignity was hurt, the general laughter cut him to the heart, and though he tried by vigorous shouting to set things going again he was not successful. He was just about to take refuge behind the bass viol again; but first one supreme effort—he drew out his silver watch, in those days a rare and costly ornament. 'It is nearly ten,' he said. 'Now for the Bride's Minuet! I will play.'

'A wonderful watch,' said the swineherd, and thrust forward his face in reverent curiosity.

'What did it cost?' cried Wilm Hülsmeier, Frederick's rival. 'Do you want to pay for it?' asked Frederick. 'Have you paid for it?' answered Wilm. Frederick threw him a haughty glance and picked up the bow in silent majesty. 'Well, well,' said Hülsmeier, 'one has heard of such things, you know; Fray Ebel had a beautiful watch too, until Aaron the Jew took it from him again.' Frederick did not answer, but signed proudly to the first violin, and they began to play with all their might.

In the meantime the gentry had gone into the bedroom where the neighbours were binding the white scarf round the head of the bride as a sign of her new standing. The poor young thing cried bitterly, partly because it was the custom, partly from real depression. She was to take her place at the head of a muddled household, under the eyes of a surly old man, whom she was expected to love. He stood beside her, not in the least like the bridegroom of the Psalms who coming out of his chamber rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 'You have wept enough now,' he said peevishly, 'remember you are not expected to make me happy, I shall make you happy!' She looked up at him submissively and appeared to think he was right. The business was finished; the young wife had drunk to her husband, some young wags had looked through the tripod to see that the veil sat straight, and everybody was pushing their way back to the dancing-floor, whence came unceasing laughter and noise. Frederick was no longer there. A great and unbearable insult had been offered him, for the Jew Aaron, a butcher and, when occasion offered, second-hand dealer, from the next town, had suddenly arrived, and after a short but unsatisfactory private talk had dunned him before everybody for the payment of ten talers due since the previous Easter for his silver watch. Frederick had gone away like a ruined man, the Jew following him and crying, 'Oh alas! why did I not listen to sensible people! They told me a hundred times that you had all your possessions on your back, and no bread in



the cupboard!' The place shook with laughter; many had followed into the yard. 'Seize the Jew! weigh him against a pig!' shouted some; others had become serious. 'Frederick looked as white as a sheet,' said one old woman, and the crowd parted as the gentry's carriage drove out of the yard. On the way home Baron von S. was very depressed, the usual result when his desire for popularity had caused him to attend such a festivity. He looked morosely out of the carriage. 'What figures are those?' He pointed to two dark shadows running in front of the carriage like ostriches. They disappeared into the castle. 'A pair from our own stall!' he sighed. Arrived at home, he found the entire entrance hall filled with servants gathered round two of the farm hands who had sunk down pale and breathless on the stairs. They declared that they had been followed by old Mergel's ghost as they returned home through Breder Wood. First there was a rustling and snapping above them; then high in the air a clapping sound like two sticks beaten together; then suddenly a piercing scream, and quite distinctly the words, 'Alas, my poor soul!' from high above them. One of them declared that he had seen glowing eyes shining through the branches, and both had run as fast as their legs would carry them.

'Rubbish,' said the master crossly, and went into his room to change his clothes. The next morning the fountain in the garden would not play, and it was discovered that somebody had damaged a pipe, apparently in looking for the head of a horse which long years before had been

buried there, and which was considered a sure safeguard against witches and ghosts. 'Hm,' said the master, 'what rogues don't steal, fools spoil.'

Three days later a fearful storm raged. It was midnight, but nobody in the castle had gone to bed. The master stood at the window and looked anxiously out into the darkness across his fields. Leaves and twigs blew past the window-panes; at times a tile fell and was smashed to pieces in the courtyard. 'Terrible weather,' said Baron von S. His wife looked nervous. 'Are you certain that the fire is safe?' she said; 'Grete, go and make quite sure, put it quite out! Let us read the Gospel of St. John.' They all knelt down, and the housewife began to read:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'—A terrible peal of thunder—they all started up; then a frightful scream and tumult on the stairs. 'In God's name, is the house on fire?' cried Frau von S. and sank down with her face on the seat of her chair. The door was flung open and in rushed the wife of Aaron the Jew, white as death, her hair hanging wildly round her, dripping with rain. She threw herself on her knees before the master. 'Justice!' she cried, 'Justice!' my husband has been murdered!' and fell in a dead faint.

It was only too true, and the inquiry which followed showed that Aaron the Jew had been killed by a single blow on the temple with a blunt instrument, probably a cudgel. Except the blue mark on the left temple there was no wound. The evidence of the Jewess and her

servant, Samuel, was this: Three days before, Aaron had gone out in the afternoon to buy cattle, and had said that he would probably be away all night as there were several people in the villages of B. and S. whom he wanted to call on to collect money long owing. In that case he would spend the night with Salomon the butcher at B. When he did not return the next day his wife was very worried, and on the third day at three o'clock in the afternoon, accompanied by her servant and her dog, she had set out to look for him. Nobody knew anything of him at Salomon's, he had not been there at all. Then she went to all the peasants with whom she knew Aaron had business.

Only two of them had seen him, and both on the day on which he had left home. By this time it was growing late. Driven by terrible anxiety the woman turned homewards with some faint hope that her husband might be already there. In Breder Wood they were overtaken by the storm and had sought shelter under a great beech-tree on the hillside; the dog had behaved strangely, and at last, in spite of every attempt to coax him back, had disappeared into the wood. Suddenly by a flash of lightning the woman saw something white lying beside her on the ground. It was her husband's staff, and almost at the same moment the dog burst through the undergrowth carrying something in his mouth; it was her husband's shoe. It was not long before they found the body of the Jew in a ditch, covered with dead leaves.

This was the account which the servant gave,

backed up intermittently by the woman; the terrible tension had lessened, and she seemed to be half crazy or rather stupid. 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' she said at intervals.

The same night orders were sent to the watchmen to arrest Frederick. No accusation was necessary, for the Baron S. had himself been an eyewitness of a scene which was bound to throw the deepest suspicion on him; added to that there was the ghost story of that evening, the clash of sticks in Breder Wood, the cry from the height. As the clerk was just then absent, Herr von S. dealt with the affair more quickly than would otherwise have happened. Nevertheless dawn was beginning to appear before the watchmen had managed, as noiselessly as possible, to surround poor Margaret's house. The Baron himself knocked; hardly a moment passed before the door was opened and Margaret appeared, fully clothed. Herr von S. was startled, he hardly recognized her, she looked so pale and stony. 'Where is Frederick?' he asked with unsteady voice.

'Seek him,' she replied, and sat down on a chair. The Baron hesitated an instant longer.

'Come in, come in!' he said then, brusquely; 'what are we waiting for?' They entered Frederick's room. He was not there, but the bed was still warm. They went up into the loft, down into the cellar, prodded the hay, looked behind every barrel, and even into the oven: he was not there. Some went into the garden, looked behind the fence and up into the apple-trees: he was not to be found.

'Got away!' said the master, with very mixed feelings; the sight of the old woman had affected him very much. 'Give me the key to that box!' Margaret did not answer. 'Give me the key!' repeated the master, and then noticed that it was sticking in the lock. The contents of the box were emptied out: the fugitive's best clothes, and his mother's poor finery, then two shrouds with black ribbons, one for a man and one for a woman. Baron von S. was deeply touched. Right at the bottom of the box lay the silver watch, and a few letters in a very clear hand, one signed by a man who was under strong suspicion of being connected with the Blue Blouses. The Baron took them with him to look through, and they all left the house, Margaret all the time giving no other sign of life than an incessant biting of the lips and twitching of the eyelids.

When he reached the castle the Baron found his clerk there. The latter had reached home the previous evening, and declared that, as his master had not sent for him, he had slept through the whole affair.

'You are always too late,' said the Baron angrily. 'Wasn't there a single old woman in the village to tell the story to your maid? and why did nobody call you?' 'Sir,' replied Kapp, 'certainly Anne Marie heard of the affair an hour before I did; but she knew that Your Excellency was managing the business yourself, and also,' he added in a plaintive tone, 'I was dead tired.' 'Pretty police!' murmured the master, 'all the old women in the village know

all about everything which should be kept absolutely secret.' Then he added vehemently: 'He must be a silly fool of a criminal who manages to get caught!'

Both were silent awhile. 'My coachman lost his way in the darkness,' began the clerk presently; 'we had to halt over an hour in the wood, it was an awful storm; I thought the wind would blow the carriage over. At last, when the rain ceased, we drove on, straight ahead, unable to see a hand before our face. Then the coachman said, 'If only we don't get too near the quarry!' I was terrified myself; I ordered a halt and struck a light that at least I might have the comfort of my pipe. Suddenly we heard, nearly perpendicularly below us, the clock strike. Your Excellency can imagine what I felt like. I jumped out of the carriage, for one can trust one's own legs but not those of a horse. So I stood, in mud and rain, without daring to move, until, thank God, daylight shortly began to appear. And where were we? Close to Heerser Cliff, and the tower of Heerser church was just below us. Another twenty steps and we should all have been killed.' 'That was certainly no joke,' said the Baron, half appeased.

He had in the meantime looked through the papers he had brought with him. They were dunning letters about borrowed money, mostly from money-lenders. 'I did not think,' he murmured, 'that the Mergels were in so deeply.' 'Yes, and that it must all be exposed,' added Kapp, 'that will be a bitter pill for Margaret to swallow.' 'Ah, good God! she isn't thinking of

that now!' With these words the master got up and left the room with Kapp in order to view the body. The investigation was short, the verdict, death by violence, the probable murderer fled; the proof against him certainly strong, but not demonstrable without personal confession, his flight very suspicious. So the judicial proceedings were closed for lack of evidence.

The Jews of the neighbourhood had shown great interest; the widow's house was always full of mourners and counsellors.

No one could remember having seen so many Jews in L.

Much embittered by the murder of their fellow believer, they spared neither trouble nor money to find the murderer. It was known that one of them offered to one of his customers, whose debt ran into hundreds, and whom he thought a particularly astute person, to cancel his entire debt if he would help to get Mergel arrested; for the belief was widespread amongst the Jews that the murderer had only escaped with the help of good friends, and was probably still in the neighbourhood. But when nothing was any use, and the judicial proceedings were declared closed, on the following morning there appeared at the castle a number of the most respected Jews to arrange a deal with the master. Their object was the beech-tree under which Aaron's stick was found and where the murder had probably taken place. 'Do you want to cut it down? Now in full leaf?' asked the master.

'No, Your Excellency, it must stand, summer and winter, as long as a chip of it remains.'

'But if I cut down that wood, then it will damage the new growth.' 'We are prepared to give much more than the ordinary price.' They offered 200 talers. The deal was closed, and all the rangers strongly enjoined on no account to damage the Jews' Beech.

In the evening a procession of at least sixty Jews, their Rabbis at the head, all silent and with downcast eyes, was seen to make its way to Breder Wood.

They remained more than an hour in the wood, and then came solemnly and silently back, through the village of B. to the Zellerfeld, where they separated, each going his own way.

The next morning a Jewish inscription was found cut into the trunk with an axe.

And where was Frederick? Gone, without doubt, far enough to be out of reach of the short arm of so weak a police. He had soon been forgotten. Simon rarely spoke of him, and then badly; the Jewess comforted herself and took another husband. Only poor Margaret remained unconsolated.

Some six months later the Baron read aloud to his clerk a letter which he had just received. 'Strange, strange!' he said, 'Think, Kapp, Mergel was perhaps not guilty of murder. Here is a letter from the presiding judge at P. "*Le vrai n'est pas toujours vraisemblable*"; I have often noticed that in my calling, and again quite recently. Do you know that your faithful Frederick Mergel was perhaps as innocent of murdering the Jew as you or I? Unfortunately there is no proof, but the likelihood is great.



A member of the Schlemming Band (who by the way are nearly all under lock and key) named Moses, said at the last trial that he repented of nothing so much as the murder of a fellow believer, Aaron, whom he had killed in a wood, and then found only sixpence on the body. Unfortunately the court adjourned then for lunch, and while we were at table, the dog of a Jew hung himself with one of his own garters. What do you say to that? Aaron is certainly a common Jewish name, &c.'

'What do you say to that?' repeated the Baron, 'and why did the silly fellow run away?'

The clerk thought the matter over. 'Well, it might have been because of an affair in the wood which we have just been investigating. Isn't there a saying, a "wicked man runs away from his own shadow"? Mergel's conscience was black enough without that extra spot.'

And that was all. Frederick gone, disappeared, and—John Nobody, the poor, unnoticed John, disappeared at the same time.

A long time passed, twenty-eight years, almost the half of a lifetime: the Baron had grown old and grey, his good-natured assistant Kapp was long in his grave. Men, animals, plants had been born, grown up, died; only the castle remained the same, grey and distinguished, looking down upon the huts which resembled old, suffering people, just about to fall down but still standing.

It was Christmas Eve, 1788.

Deep snow lay in the defiles, a good twelve

foot high, and the bitter wind froze the windows of the warm rooms. It was nearly midnight, but pale lights shone out everywhere above the snow, and in every house the inhabitants were kneeling to welcome the beginning of Christmas Day by prayer, as is the custom in all Catholic countries, or was, at least, in those days. From Breder Wood a figure emerged and began to make its way slowly towards the village; the wayfarer seemed very weak or ill; he groaned heavily, and dragged himself with great trouble through the snow.

Halfway down the hill-side he stood still, leaned upon his staff, and gazed steadfastly at the lights. It was so quiet everywhere, so dead and cold; one was reminded of will-o'-the-wisps in churchyards. The clock in the church tower struck twelve, the last stroke faded slowly away and in the nearest house quiet singing began, swelling from house to house through the whole village:

A child so dear  
is born to us to-day  
Of a Virgin pure  
that joy be ours alway.  
And had that child not been born  
Then were we all together forlorn,  
Salvation is for all.  
O, Jesus Christ, my own dear love,  
Who came as man from heaven above,  
Redeem thou us from hell!

The man on the hill-side had fallen on his knees and tried with trembling voice to join in; but nothing came but loud sobs, and heavy,

hot tears fell in the snow. The second verse began; he murmured the words; then the third and the fourth. The carol was ended, and the lights in the houses began to move. Then the man got up wearily and crept slowly down into the village. He crept past several houses, then he stopped in front of a door and knocked gently.

'What is that?' said a woman's voice within; 'the door is rattling and there is no wind.' He knocked louder—'In God's name let a poor half-frozen man in, who comes from Turkish slavery!'—Whispering in the kitchen. 'Go to the inn,' said another voice, 'the fifth house from here.' 'For the mercy of God, let me in, I have no money.'

After some hesitation the door was opened, and a man with a lamp looked out. 'Come in,' he said at last, 'you won't cut our throats.'

In the kitchen, beside the man, there were a middle-aged woman, an old woman, and five children. They all crowded round the new-comer, and surveyed him with shy curiosity. A wretched figure! With wry neck and crooked back, the whole figure broken and wasted; long, snow-white hair hung round his face, which had the drawn expression of one who has suffered much and long. The woman went silently to the fire and added fresh fuel. 'We can't give you a bed,' she said, 'but I will lay some fresh straw for you here; you must do the best you can with that.' 'May God reward you,' answered the stranger, 'I am used to much worse.' The returned wanderer was recognized as John Nobody, and he confirmed the fact that he was the same John who had once fled with Frederick Mergel.

The next day the village was full of the adventures of the long-missing man.

Everybody wanted to see the man who had come back from Turkey, and they were almost astonished that he looked like other men. The young people had certainly no remembrance of him, but the older ones recognized him quite easily, pitiably changed though he was.

'John, John, how grey you are!' said one old woman. 'And how did you get a wry neck?' 'From wood and water carrying as a slave,' he replied.

'And what happened to Mergel? Surely you both went away together?'

'Certainly, but I don't know where he is; we got separated. When you think of him, say a prayer for him,' he added, 'he will need it.'

People inquired why Frederick had fled when he had not killed the Jew after all. 'Not?' said John, and listened eagerly while they related what the Baron had told them in order to clear Frederick's name. 'Then it was all for nothing,' he said thoughtfully, 'all for nothing, all that suffering!' He sighed deeply, and began to ask about many things. Simon was long dead, but first he had been reduced to complete poverty, through lawsuits and bad debtors whom he dared not bring to justice because the business between them would not stand the light of day.

He had finally been reduced to begging, and had died on the straw in a stranger's shed. Margaret had lived longer, but completely imbecile.

The villagers had got tired of helping her, as

she allowed everything they gave her to be ruined; but that is the way of people, to neglect the most helpless, those who are always in need of help because they cannot help themselves. Nevertheless she had never been in actual need; the people at the castle looked after her, sending her some dinner every day, and when her wretched condition became complete emaciation, they sent her medical help. The son of the swineherd who on that ill-fated evening had admired Frederick's silver watch now lived in her house. 'All gone, all dead!' sighed John.

In the evening as it grew dark and the moon rose, he was seen moving about the churchyard; he did not pray by any grave, did not even go close to any, but he seemed to stare fixedly at certain ones from a distance. There he was found by Brandes, the ranger, the son of the murdered man, who had been sent by his master to fetch him to the castle.

On entering the living room he looked shyly round, as though dazzled by the light, and then at the Baron who sat huddled up in an arm-chair, but still with the bright eyes, and still wearing a little red cap on his head as twenty-eight years before; beside him sat his wife, also grown old, very old.

'Now, John,' said the Baron, 'give me a good account of all your adventures. But,' he looked at him through his glasses, 'they did make a wrck of you in Turkey.'

John began: how Mergel had called him away from the fire at night, and said he must go away with him. 'But why did the silly boy run away?

You know that he was innocent?' John looked down: 'I don't really know, but I think it was because of trouble in the woods. Simon had so many things on hand; nobody said anything to me about them, but I think things were not all as they should be.' 'What did Frederick tell you?' 'Nothing but that we must get away, they were after us. So we ran as far as Heerser; there it was still dark, and we hid behind the big crucifix in the churchyard till it grew lighter, because we were afraid of the stone-quarries at Zellerfelde; and when we had sat there awhile we suddenly heard snorting and stamping above us, and saw long rays of light in the air right above Heerser church tower. We jumped up and ran as fast as we could, straight ahead, and when daylight came we actually found ourselves on the road to P.'

John shuddered at the remembrance, and the Baron thought of the dead Kapp and his adventure on the Heerser Cliff.

'Strange,' he laughed, 'you were so near one another! but go on!'

John related how they reached P. and were lucky enough to get over the frontier.

From there they had begged their way as wandering artisans as far as Freiburg in Breisgau. 'I had my bread-bag,' he said, 'and Frederick a small bundle, so people believed us.' In Freiburg they had been recruited by the Austrians; he had not been wanted, but Frederick insisted that he be taken as well. So he began his training. 'We stayed in Freiburg that winter,' he went on, 'and it was not too bad, even for me, for Frederick

often remembered me and helped me when I did anything stupid. In the spring we marched away to Hungary, and in the autumn the war with Turkey began. I do not know much about it, for I was taken prisoner in the first engagement, and since then have been for twenty-six years a Turkish slave!' 'Dear God, that is dreadful,' said the Baron's wife.—'Bad enough, for the Turks treated us Christians like dogs; the worst was that the hard work took away my strength; also I grew older, and yet was expected to do as much as in earlier days.'

He was silent awhile.

'Yes,' he said then, 'it was more than human strength or patience could stand; I could not go on. From there I got aboard a Dutch ship.' 'How did you manage to do that?' asked the Baron. 'They fished me out of the Bosphorus,' answered John. The Baron looked at him with surprise and raised a warning finger; but John went on with his story.

'On the ship things were not much better. There was an outbreak of scurvy; those who were not absolutely helpless had to work beyond their strength, and the power of the ship's rope was as great as that of the Turkish whip.

'At last,' he said, 'when we reached Holland, Amsterdam, I was allowed to go free because I was of no use, and the merchant to whom the ship belonged took pity on me and wanted to give me a job as a porter. But'—he shook his head—'I preferred to beg my way back here.' 'That was silly enough,' said the Baron. 'Oh, sir, I have spent my life amongst Turks and

heretics, might I not at least lay my bones in a Catholic churchyard?' The Baron drew out his purse, 'There John, now go, but come again soon. You must tell me all in greater detail; to-day it was rather confused.

'You are still very tired?' 'Very tired,' answered John, 'and,' here he pointed to his forehead, 'my thoughts are sometimes so strange, I don't quite know what it is.' 'I know, from old days,' said the Baron, 'Now go. Hülsmeier will put you up to-night; come again to-morrow.'

Baron von S. felt the deepest sympathy for the poor creature; by the next day it had been arranged where he could be lodged; he was to have his food at the castle, and clothes could also be found. 'Sir,' said John, 'I can still do some work; I can make wooden spoons, and you can use me to carry messages.'

Baron von S. shook his head pityingly. 'You won't manage that very well.' 'Oh, yes, sir, when I am once in the way of it—I can't go quickly, but I shall get there, and it won't be as bitter to me as one might think.' 'Well,' said the Baron, doubtfully, 'would you like to try? Here is a letter to be taken to P. There is no particular hurry.'

The next day John took possession of a small room in the house of a widow in the village.

He carved spoons, had his meals at the castle, and went errands for the Baron. On the whole things went well with him; his master was kind and often talked with him about Turkey, the Austrian service, and the sea.

'John could tell wonderful stories,' he said to



his wife, 'if he were not so weak-minded.' 'Rather melancholy than weak-minded,' she replied, 'I am always afraid he will go mad.' 'Oh, nonsense,' answered the Baron, 'he was always half-witted; half-wits never go mad.'

Some time later John took an unusually long time on one of his errands. The good Frau von S. was very worried about him and was just sending out to search for him when he was heard stumbling up the stairs.

'You have been a long time, John,' she said, 'I thought you must have got lost in Breder Wood.'

'I came through the pine wood.'

'That is a long way round; why didn't you come through Breder Wood?'

He looked up sadly: 'I was told that the wood had been cut down, and now there are many side paths there so I was afraid of not finding my way out again. I am getting old and silly,' he added slowly. 'Did you see,' said Frau von S. later to her husband, 'what a strange look there was in his eyes? I tell you, Ernst, he will come to a sad end.'

September was drawing near. The fields were bare, the leaves began to fall, and many began to feel that the scissors were nearing the thread of their lives. John also seemed to be suffering under the influence of the approaching equinox: those who saw him in those days said he looked noticeably troubled, and talked to himself incessantly, a thing which he had done but seldom. Finally he failed to return home one night. It was thought that perhaps the Baron had ~~sen~~

him rather far; the second night he did not return, on the third day his landlady grew anxious. She went to the castle and made inquiries. 'God forbid,' said the Baron, 'I know nothing of him; but call the hunters at once and William the ranger! If the poor cripple has only fallen into a dry ditch he would be unable to get out again. Who knows if he has not perhaps broken one of his bent legs. Take the dogs,' he called to the departing hunters, 'and look carefully in the ditches, and in the stone-quarry,' he added louder.

The hunters returned several hours later; they had found no sign of John. The Baron was very troubled: 'When I think that he might be lying like a stone, and unable to help himself! But he may still be alive; a man can live for three days without food.' He set out himself to search; questions were asked at every house, horns were blown everywhere, the dogs were urged on to seek—all in vain! A child had seen him sitting at the edge of Breder Wood, carving a spoon; 'but he cut it right in two,' said the little girl. That was two days earlier. In the afternoon there was another clue; again a child, who had seen him on the opposite side of Breder Wood, sitting with his face on his knees, as though asleep. That was yesterday. It seemed as though he had wandered about all the time in Breder Wood.

'If only this wretched undergrowth were not so thick! One cannot get through it,' said the Baron. The dogs were driven into the young growth; they blew and shouted and at last re-

turned dissatisfied home, when they had convinced themselves that the whole wood had been searched. 'Go on! go on!' begged Frau von S., 'rather a few unnecessary steps than something missed.' The Baron was almost as anxious as she was. His uneasiness even drove him to John's lodging, though he was certain of not finding him there. He had the room opened. The bed was unmade, just as he had left it, his best coat, which Frau von S. had had made out of an old coat of her husband's, hung behind the door: on the table were a bowl, six new wooden spoons, and a box.

The Baron opened it; it contained five gro-schen neatly wrapped in paper, and four silver waistcoat buttons; the Baron looked at them carefully. 'A souvenir of Mergel,' he murmured, and went out, for he felt quite cramped in the stuffy little room.

The search went on until it was quite certain that John was no longer in the district, at least not alive.

So for the second time he had disappeared: would he ever be found again—perhaps in years to come his bones in some dry ditch? There was little hope of seeing him again alive, and certainly not after another twenty-eight years.

One morning a fortnight later young Brandes was returning through Breder Wood from that part of the forest under his charge. It was, for the time of year, an exceptionally hot day; the air shimmered, no birds were singing, only the ravens croaked in a bored manner from the branches, and held their beaks open towards

the wind. Brandes was very tired. First he took off his cap, which was heated through by the sun, then he put it on again. Both ways it was unbearable. Forcing his way through the knee-high undergrowth was difficult. No tree near except the Jews' Beech. Towards that he pushed his way and dropped tired out in the mossy shade beneath it. The coolness was so pleasant to his limbs that he closed his eyes.

'Disgusting toadstools!' he murmured, half asleep. In that district there are certain juicy toadstools which stand for a few days, then rot and give forth an unsupportable stench. Brandes thought he noticed some of these near him; he turned from side to side but did not want to get up; his dog, in the meantime, was very restless, scratched at the trunk of the tree, and barked up into the branches. 'What is it, Bello? a cat?' murmured Brandes. He half opened his eyes and saw the Jewish inscription just above him, much overgrown, but still quite recognizable. He shut his eyes again; the dog continued to bark, and finally pushed his cold muzzle into his master's face.

'Leave me in peace! what is the matter?' At that instant Brandes, lying on his back, looked up into the branches overhead, and with one movement sprang to his feet and fled like one possessed into the undergrowth.

He was deadly pale when he reached the castle: a man was hanging in the Jews' Beech; he had seen the legs hanging right above his face. 'And you did not cut him down, you ass?' shouted the Baron.

'Sir,' croaked Brandes, 'if Your Excellency had been there, you would have known that the man was no longer alive. I thought at first it was the toadstools!' Nevertheless the Baron urged them to hasten and went out with them.

They reached the beech. 'I see nothing,' said the Baron. 'You must come here, here, on this spot!' So that was it: the Baron recognized his own old shoes.

'God, it is John!—Put up the ladder! so—now down!—careful, careful, don't let him fall!—Dear heaven, the worms have begun! But undo the noose, and the cravat.' A broad scar was visible; the Baron started back.

'My God! he said; he bent again over the corpse, looked at the scar very carefully, and then remained silent, deeply shaken.

Then he turned to the ranger: 'It is not right that the innocent should suffer for the guilty; tell everybody: this'—he pointed to the corpse—'was Frederick Mergel.'

The body was buried in the carrion pit. In their main details these events really occurred in September of the year 1788.

The Jewish inscription on the tree ran:

'When thou approachest this place, thou shalt do to thyself what thou didst do to me.'

PRINTED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
OXFORD  
BY  
JOHN JOHNSON  
PRINTER  
TO THE  
UNIVERSITY